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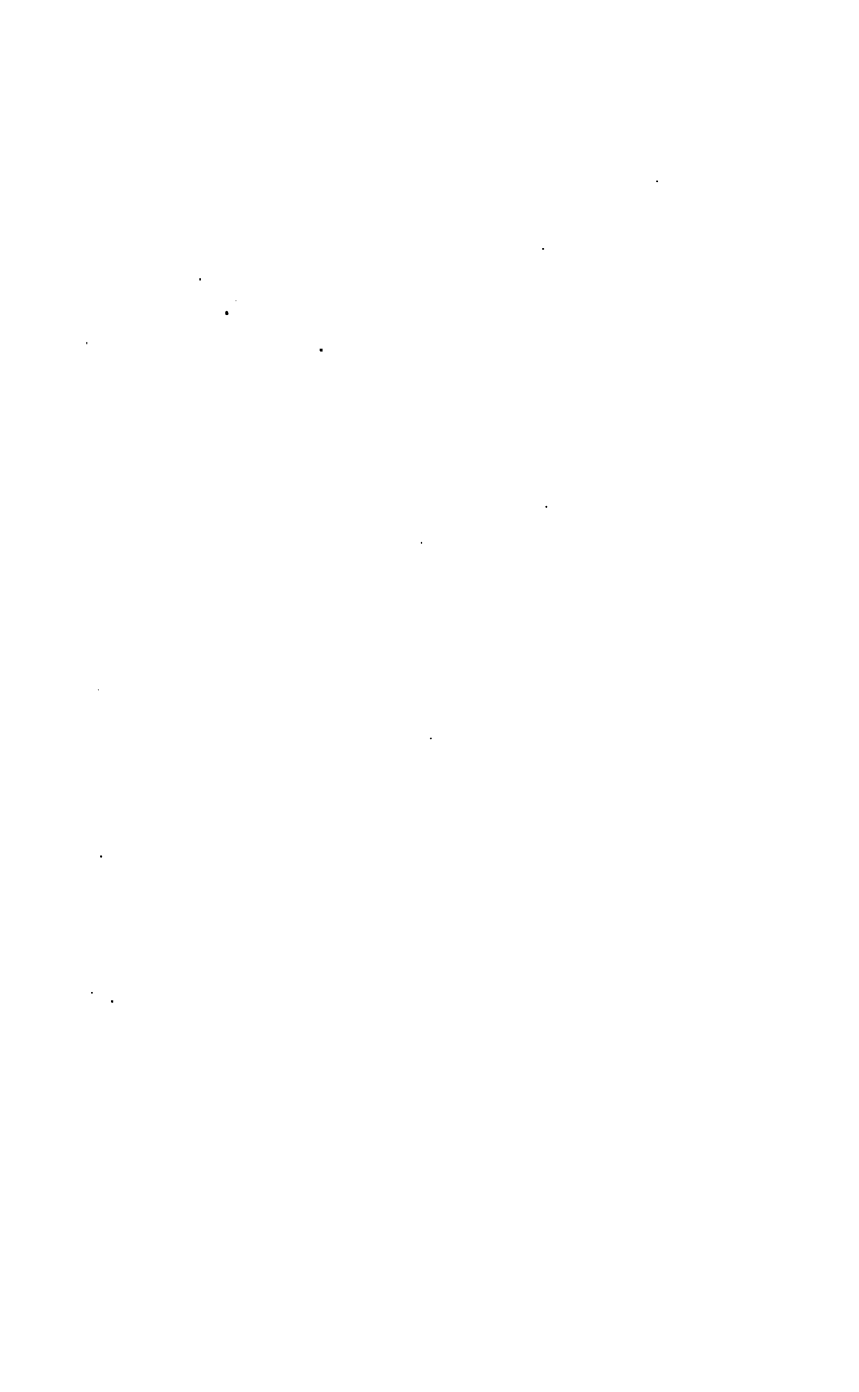
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ERRATA.

- Page 133, note, *for* S. Matt. vi. 4, *read* S. Matt. vii. 14.
,, 135, line 21, *for* sinner and the ungodly, *read* ungodly
and the sinner.
,, 168, third line from bottom, *for* house, *read* courts.
,, 179, note, *for* S. John vi. 58, *read* S. John vi. 55.
,, 195, note, *for* 1 Kings xi. 19, *read* 1 Kings ii. 19.
,, 130, line 24, *for* uplifted, *read* unlifted.



**SERMONS,
PRACTICAL AND DOCTRINAL.**

THE
WANING OF OPPORTUNITIES,
AND OTHER
SERMONS, PRACTICAL AND DOCTRINAL.

BY
A. P. FORBES, D.C.L.,
BISHOP OF BERECHIN.

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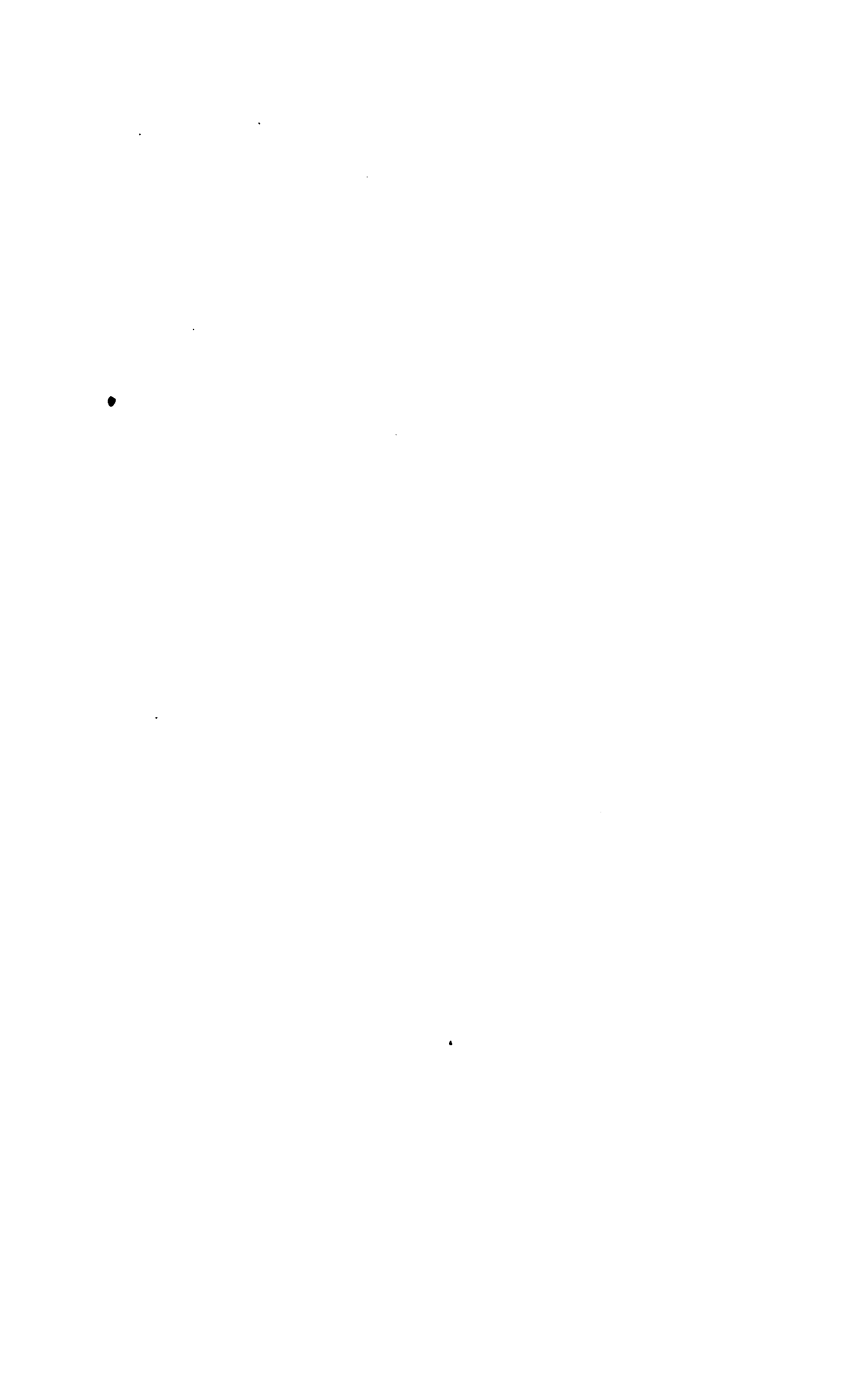


TO
ALEXANDER FORBES IRVINE, ESQ.,
YOUNGER OF DRUM,
CHANCELLOR OF THE DIOCESE OF BRECHIN,
THIS VOLUME IS,
WITH MUCH GRATITUDE, RESPECT, AND AFFECTION,
DEDICATED.

PREFACE.

OF these sermons two have been already printed—the one, the Cry of the Prophet, as a funeral sermon on the occasion of the death of one of the clergy of the author's diocese; the other, JESUS our Worship, was preached at the consecration of S. Columba's in Edinburgh. Both being out of print and in some request, it has been deemed advisable to re-publish them with only such alterations as fit them for general reading. The sermon on the Coronation of our LORD was preached during the octave of the consecration of All Saints' Church, Margaret Street, London, on the 2nd of June, 1859.

DUNDEE,
July, 1860.



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SERMON I.

WANING OF OPPORTUNITIES.

JEREMIAH VI. 4.

“WOE UNTO US! FOR THE DAY GOETH AWAY, FOR THE SHADOWS OF THE EVENING ARE STRETCHED OUT.”

WHEN the prophet uttered these solemn words, he denounced a woe against those who had received most special favours from God. The words were not addressed to the wicked nations who lived in the contempt of the ALMIGHTY, and in the persecution of His saints, but to Jeshurun the well-beloved, to His own Judah; to those on whom He had lavished His blessings, whom in mercy He had raised to great power, but now, in equal but severer mercy was about to cast down; to the seed of Abram, His servant, and to the sons of Israel, His chosen; to those whom He had elected out of a naughty world as the special recipients of His favour, and

among whom, as one of themselves, He condescended to be born. It spoke to them of the slow but sure waning of the opportunities, of the gradual but certain setting of the sun of grace. It warned them how the day of the visitation of mercy was rapidly drawing to a close, and that the night of the visitation of anger would soon set in. Nor was this an unnecessary lesson. From the graphic picture of the state of things which we find in the books of the Kings and Chronicles, we see how completely the chosen people had fallen away from that perfect model of political and social rectitude which their Divine Legislator had placed within the power of their acquisition. Had we not the painful experience of our own wayward hearts, we should be almost surprised at the downward tendencies of those for whom so much had been done. The record of the history of the old Church is more like the record of that of some barbarous godless state, than of the chosen people of God. Wars, assassinations, revolutions, lapses into idolatry, total abandonment of the outward service of God, forgetfulness even of the letter of the law, pain us, as we read these undeceived and undeceiving records; and though no doubt we here and there get hints at much piety, much hidden life with God, much lowly unobtrusive devotion, much earnest expectation and

faith in the coming Redeemer, yet the bitter lesson we read is, that not even such blessings as were showered upon erring Israel will prevent the wicked heart of man from sinning deeply and damnably.

But though God, in the probation of His creatures, made them so far free, and suffered them to be tempted, yet He left them not without many helps and aids to return and be converted. It was not for want of warning that they fell, and *are* lost. All that earnest expostulation,—all that terrific menace from One that cannot lie,—all that the infliction of severe temporal punishments could do, in the way of keeping alive the sense of religion among them, was done; and from time to time holy men were raised up “to warn Judah of her transgression, and to proclaim to Israel her sin,” till the voice of the mighty Baptist, the last and greatest of “the goodly fellowship of the prophets,” announced that the trial was accomplished, and that the axe was laid at the root of the tree.

It was as part of one of these merciful warnings that the words of the text were announced by Jeremy the prophet. We may conceive him standing in his own plot of ground at Anathoth, seized by the Inspiration of God, as the lengthening shadows pointed out the bright

and rapid setting of the sun on the fair plains of Palestine. But the exquisite beauty of the summer eve called out no corresponding images of calm and repose in the mind of the righteous man of God. Insensible to the soft stillness of the scene, yet influenced by the hour and the time, his thoughts were sad; and instead of his meditations being, like those of the patriarch Isaac in the fields at eventide,—thoughts of peace, and gratitude, and love to God,—they vented themselves in heavy foreboding sorrow, “Woe unto us, for the day goeth away, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out.”

And truly there was cause for worldly despondency, even supposing there had been no inspiration of God in the matter. The downward tendency both of Church and State was evident to the most superficial observer. Rotten at heart, the whole polity was ripe for revolution or subjugation. The foreign alliance with Egypt seemed (as the event proved) sure to fail them, and the mighty Babylonian power, already predominant, hung over them, biding the time of the vengeance of the LORD GOD Almighty. No wonder that the patriot prophet was sad. He was indeed cheered with the thought that God had not cast them off for ever, and that after a probation of seventy years He would again restore them; but he also knew, as none else

did, (for he knew it by the special inspiration of God,) how heavy would be the calamity, how weighty the misfortune that was overhanging his beloved country. And so the event proved. The warning was unheeded, and the woe came; and the men of Judah sang the Lord's song in a strange land, and in exile returned to that spiritual home, which in the riches and comfort of the earthly Canaan they had forgotten.

To us also these words may apply, for we too are on our trial, we too are God's chosen people, we too walk not worthy of our holy vocation.

And first of all it may be said that the very shadows of the world are prolonged, and that the end of all things is at hand. There is a very striking mournful strain running through the Epistles, which evinces the feeling of their inspired writers, that the world was growing old, that no new revelation would henceforth be accorded to man, and that his course would now be likely to be downward. "Little children, this is the last time." Viewing the affairs of the world, as they were permitted in their very inspiration to do, through those deep national feelings which were written in the hearts of every true son of Abram, the approaching destruction of Jerusalem and the uprooting of the

old system shed a hue of gloom and sorrow over the spirits of those very regenerators, to whom was committed the mighty task of elevating the Church of the Redeemed. And besides this, we may conceive also the heavy weight entailed upon them by the burden of the thought, that to them was now committed all that can be known by mortal man of the nature of God, and the other profound mysteries of the faith. No fresh tidings were now to come from heaven to earth. The sum of man's knowledge of God was completed in their own creed, "which faith, except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved."

And with this, would come the harassing thought, that in spite of all this knowledge, in despite of all the grace shed upon a regenerated world by the Advent of that Son of God, Whose Resurrection they attested and Whose power they wielded, there would still be so many who to the end would turn a deaf ear to that knowledge, and spurn that accorded grace; and that now nothing more *could* be done for erring man, when God had taken upon Himself man's flesh, and had shed the last drop of His Blood to redeem him. All this would press upon the hearts of the holy Apostles, casting an air of gravity, if not of gloom, over their teaching. No doubt they had the comfort and joy of be-

lieving, so beautifully described by one of their radiant choir, but still the destinies of earth were upon them; and if as the Apostles of the new law they exulted, as men they were sad.

If this lowering woe affected the thoughts of the very first promulgators of Christianity, we may see reasons why, as the times went on, that woe should deepen. The constant deterioration of all things, running side by side with the miraculous preservation of the Church, is most striking. Even the heathen poets contrast the primitive simplicity of their forefathers with the emasculated and feeble vice of their own day. What a contrast now between the fervour of the primitive times and the lukewarmness and sham of the decent religion of the present day! Compare the zeal of the early centuries with the tepidity of the present hour. Where is the spirit of S. Ignatius, or S. Cyprian, or S. Polycarp, or S. Peter, or S. Paul? What is the state of our missions? When hear we now of whole countries baptized in the blood of their first martyr bishop being won to the dominion of the faith? Compare the successes of S. Boniface in Germany, or S. Austin in England, with the feeble and turgid lies which fill the missionary reports of the present day. Compare the mean and wretched edifices in which the great God of heaven and earth is

contentedly worshipped now, with the minsters and cathedrals of earlier times. Look at our hospitals, our colleges, our receptacles for the poor, and behold us pampering vice in sumptuous dwellings, and treating poverty as a crime. Look out upon the masses of our population, living in worse than heathen darkness; men baptized into the death of CHRIST, yet daily and hourly trampling Him under foot. See the wretched children in the streets, generated and living and dying in sin, only knowing the Creator's holy and unspeakable Name to blaspheme it, and hurrying from one wretched unsatisfying vice to another, till the death of the body and of the soul unite in claiming their own. Look at the twenty imitations of the one true religion, all shivering in a thousand pieces the bright mirror of God's truth, and proclaiming their own particular reflection of the Divine ray to be the one light by which man should walk. See how, day by day, the political problems of labour, rent, and the physical relations of society are so infinitely complicated, that legislation becomes experiment, and the wisdom of the soundest statesman empiricism. Watch the course of other countries, from whose headlong course we have been kept by circumstances which we cannot ensure at all times, and which, the chances are, may fail us

in the future ; and then say whether the elements of social anarchy be not sufficient to justify us in applying to our own condition the lessons conveyed to us by the decline and fall of the Jewish theocracy, and to draw from our lips the sad words of the desponding prophet, " Woe unto us ! for the day goeth away, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out."

But even in a purely Christian sense these words may be applied. As in the commemorative year of the Church, so in the actual reality, the suffering life of JESUS is past, and the glorified, heavenly, and sacramental life of JESUS is begun. What the prophet Jeremiah expressed in the text was uttered by the disciples at Emmaus, and in them by the whole Church, " Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent."

When the Divine Word became Incarnate, an interchange was made between heaven and earth. We gave to heaven not only the spirits of the just made perfect in the glorious army of saints and martyrs, to fill the thrones of the fallen angels, but we even have penetrated into the very sanctuary of the Beatific Presence of God. For there, in the very centre of the radiance of heaven, round which adoring seraphs ever burn and the countless cherubim hymn

forth undying praises, reigns the flesh of man in the Person of **JESUS** the Son of **MARY**, the Incarnate Word of **GOD**. And by the same mystery heaven has given to earth, by the terms of the exchange, not only fresh graces and clearer revelations of the celestial bliss,—not only clearer evidences of the future state, and mightier aids to attain to its happiness,—but the very permanent indwelling of **GOD** among us His people, even **EMMANUEL** **GOD** with us, who dwells where two or three are gathered together in His Name, and Who is in a special manner present with us in the highest act of Christian worship.

Thus, while it is towards evening, and the day of the world is far spent, **CHRIST** abides with us in His holy mysteries. Thus, while the day goeth away, and the shadows of the evening are stretched out, our eyes are fixed in faith on the glorious shining of the Sun of Righteousness, gilding the purple clouds, and flooding the western sky with the torrent of His radiance. What is it that redeems this earth from being a howling wilderness of sin,—what is it that restores the broken harmonies of the world, and recreates the universe with an anticipation of the restoration of all things,—what is it that takes the sting out of every sorrow, and sweetens the bitterness of every

woe, and subdues death itself,—what is it that strengthens the feeble and nerves the strong, and gives feet to the lame and eyes to the blind,—what is it that crowns the saints on earth, even in the midst of the contradiction of sinners,—what is it that produces perfection within the Christian, and in his small measure and degree makes him like to God, Who is his pattern,—what, but the abiding of CHRIST among His people? what, but the Presence of Jesus Himself,—the union of the Second Adam with the sons of the first.

Nor is it only in the Divine mysteries and in the solemn functions of the Church that Jesus visits the soul. No doubt every ordinance, every prayer, every fast, every festival, is a visit of Him to us. Every Lent, every Easter, CHRIST knocks at the doors of our hearts, and says, “Open to Me, My sister.” Yet beyond this, everything that awakens the soul to a consciousness of her immortal condition is such a visit; and how often and in how many ways does this take place! Sometimes by the disgust and hatred of the world; sometimes by bitter and blighting disappointment of the heart’s best affections; sometimes by the failure of our ambitions or the injury of our prospects, or by pining sickness or by acute agony; more often by the inward peace and joy of the HOLY

SPIRIT, by the thought of His own exhaustless love, by the dawning of His light upon the soul, by the bitter sorrow for mis-spent years and for the sins of our youth, by the unformed yearning of the heart toward the Supreme Good,—JESUS visits the heart.

Yet how often even then, in the calm constraining peace of that holy visitation may not the thought arise, "woe unto us, for the day goeth away, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out;" for can we really assert that we are living up to the grace which God gives us; are we listening with all our attention to the whispers of His blessed Spirit? are we seizing every opportunity as it passes of co-operating with the gifts which He so plenteously sheds down upon us? Who is there among us, who must not feel in the very lavishness of God's gifts to him, a sort of anxious feeling lest after all he is not occupying with the talent committed to him as he ought to do? How have we profited by past influences of grace? how have we improved the fruit of our prayers? how have we evinced our thankfulness for past mercies? what new virtues have we derived from our communions and the like? These are questions we would do well to ask ourselves; for the measure of the opportunities placed within our reach, and the degree in

which we have used them, more than the intrinsic value of our actions, will determine their effects for or against us at the last day, and it is the very condition of our spiritual being that we go "from strength to strength"—that we ever live up to the advantages accorded to us, and by so doing draw down more upon us.

And if these words convey a sobering and a solemnizing lesson even to such as are trying to lead holy and devoted lives, what is their tenor when applied to the worldly and the careless, "Woe unto us, for the day goeth away, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out." It is of the nature of sin to drug the conscience, to lull it with opiates before it sinks into a slumber from whence it shall only be awakened by the anticipation of the agony after death; but surely if there be a thought calculated to alarm the sinner and to recal him to his neglected obligations, it is that of the rapid passing of the hour of mercy—of the lengthening shadows which the Sun of Righteousness casts as he sets upon a soul for ever. O, my brethren, let me earnestly press this upon you,—the awful woe that hangs over you if you neglect yourselves now. You can only calculate on the present. Even natural causes may interfere to prevent your return to God. Sudden death, or the bereavement of your rea-

son, or the acuteness of some illness, or the loss of memory, may physically incapacitate you from the work of repentance ; but oh, worse than that, if you continue in worldliness and sin, you may kill the spiritual life within you, you may destroy the whole work of CHRIST within your souls, you may erase the beneficial work of your regeneration, and retain it only as a condemnation and a curse upon you, you may soil the mark of your indelible confirmation, you may sin away all grace so that no trace of the image of God shall remain on you, you may deaden your conscience and be so eaten up with some sin, such as sloth, pride, or the love of the world, that not the voice of CHRIST Himself speaking to you by His Church will avail to restore you. And for this dreadful state of things it does not require "some great thing." A neglected conscience, a failure in the practice of self-examination and prayer—a yielding to each besetting temptation as it assaults you, will be sufficient to do the devil's work within you. And every day that you continue in this condition, your danger will be the greater, your chance of recovery less. Your only safety is to rouse yourselves, to place before your eyes the real danger of your actual condition, not to mind present discomfort if the breaking of an unholy habit or the subjugation of some

devilish temper be attended with real pain ; not to fear the world which, to gain you back to itself, will taunt you with your present inconsistency and your past shame ; to bear hardness as a good soldier of JESUS CHRIST, the more hard in penitence for your past unholy softness and self-indulgence ; to suffer all things gladly, only too thankful that the ALMIGHTY is graciously pleased to purify you here with the cleansing fires of His merciful chastisement ; to look for little consolation in this world, but like your Master, " Who for the joy that was set before Him despised the shame," to count all things loss if you may attain Him in the end.

Thus shalt thou, fellow Christian, in the last day be accepted for His merits Who died and was buried and rose again for thee. Thus shalt thou be able in tranquillity to contemplate the gradual lengthenings of the shadows, as the day goeth away, having a good hope that though thy sun set in obscurity, yet that, awaking after the likeness of God, thou shalt be satisfied with it.

1

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SERMON II.

THE PSALMS CONSIDERED AS A MANUAL OF REPENTANCE.

ECCLUS. XLVII. 8.

"IN ALL HIS WORKS HE PRAISED THE HOLY ONE MOST
HIGH WITH WORDS OF GLORY. WITH HIS WHOLE HEART
HE SUNG SONGS, AND LOVED HIM THAT MADE HIM."

THE book of Psalms is so ample a manual for penitents, that assuming it for the moment to be the language of David—as abstracted from the fact that that holy man spake by the inspiration of God, it mainly is—we cannot do better than dwell at some length on the illustration it affords us of the different stages of the sinner's return.

Now, according to theologians, the process of repentance is thus conceived of:

First. The faith which had been asleep during sin is awakened, either by serious consideration, or by hearing the Word of God, or by the

remorse of conscience, or by some other motive, and the sinner in a moment of compunction comes to discover how loathsome sin is, and how justly it deserves the punishment of God in all eternity. This, by the help of the HOLY GHOST, produces within the heart a wholesome fear of the justice of God, and of that miserable death, judgment and hell that are daily overtaking unrepenting sinners.

It is evident that a regard for the consequences of sin must be the first stage in all repentance, for after a course of sin the fine feelings become so blunted that they are incapable, in the beginning, of appreciating higher motives. Then as sin is generally caused by inordinate self-love, here is that very self-love legitimately appealed to. Moreover, the revelation of God's justice which He has made, would have been useless had it not appealed to the fears of men—fears which we find surviving all other portions of the true religion, and underlying the last sense of a superintending Providence. It is fear that prompts the propitiation of the Fetish, as it is fear that brings the fallen Christian to the feet of the Holy SAVIOUR.

But this fear of the LORD is not a slavish fear. It is not a mere dread of vindictive power; it is rather a recognition of the danger of out-

raging goodness. It is a sense of the justice of God, but that justice is so intimately mixed up with mercy, that they cannot be separated. It is essentially filial in its character—the dread that an erring child has for having offended the best of Fathers.

Now let us apply this in the language of David. He begins by laying the foundation of all religion in this reverential fear. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom. A good understanding have all they that do thereafter. The praise of it endureth for ever." And again: "My flesh trembleth for fear of Thee, and I am afraid of Thy judgments." These judgments are His reward of the good, and His condemnation of sinners. No idea so thoroughly underlies the whole of the Psalms as that "the way of the ungodly shall perish," however prosperous for a time they may be, though they flourish as the green bay tree; "as for the ungodly they shall perish; and the enemies of the LORD shall consume as the fat of lambs, yea, even as the smoke shall they consume away."

Yet this fear is not one of simple terror; it is one which makes the sinner cautious, but not despairing, for he says, "As a father hath compassion on his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear Him." Nay, to this fear are

allied many spiritual blessings. "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him. The eye of the LORD is on them that fear Him. The angels of the LORD encamp about them that fear Him. Great is His mercy towards them that fear Him. He hath given meat unto them that fear Him." Benedictions summed up in that highest of all, "The LORD's delight is in them that fear Him;" and, lest sinners should fancy that this is only the habitual reverence of the "just man who needeth no repentance," he adds, "and put their trust in His mercy."

But even in this filial fear the sinner does not rest. Alarmed with the terrors of Divine justice, he seeks how he may escape the terrible evils that compass him on every side, and how he may get rid of his sins, the true source of all his evils; and here the mercy and goodness of God, and His precious Blood shed for sinners, present themselves before the eyes of his soul and encourage him to hope, that his merciful FATHER, Who has watched over him during all the time of his sins, Who has preserved him from innumerable evils, even when he sought not His protection, Who has loaded him with many benefits, even when he was at enmity with Him, Who has purchased him at the price of His own Blood, will certainly receive him now that he sincerely desires to return to Him.

The thought of the justice of God necessarily induces the sinner to seek to propitiate it, and the sense of the goodness of the Supreme infuses a feeling of hope into the soul. He knows that so great is the goodness of God, that he has only to renounce his sins and to neglect nothing required on his part to their perfect absolution, to be quite sure of a perfect reconciliation with Him. This consciousness proceeds from the sense he has of the essential attribute of Benevolence and Love, which is the characteristic of the Divine Mind—nay, which is God Himself; and this is still more enhanced by the more explicit faith he has in the redemption of the world wrought by CHRIST and in all the blessed fruits of the Incarnation. Even before our LORD came veiled in mortal flesh, His promise kept alive the sentiment of godly hope in all the just under the old law. As CHRIST was then, as now, their righteousness, so was the thought of Him their consolation. With us it is memory; with them it was anticipation; but still the coming Daysman, dimly shadowed forth in prophecy and holy spell, was indeed the light that lightened the Gentiles and was the glory of His people Israel. Under every dispensation then, the second motive of repentance in the order of time will be the love of God manifested to man in all the gracious dis-

pensions of His Providence, and in all the blessed ordinances of His grace.

We find this, more or less explicitly stated in the works of the Royal penitent. He tells us that his song—the expression of all his commingled hope and fear, his joy in the LORD, his sorrow for sin—shall be of mercy and judgment. In his most desolate state, he says, “Thou, LORD, art good and gracious, and of great mercy unto them that call upon Thee.” When repeating his *De profundis*, he says, “With the LORD there is mercy and with Him is copious redemption.” After declaring the searching of trial, he praises God that He hath not cast out his prayer, nor turned His mercy from him. He says that God’s lovingkindness is ever before his eyes, and that he delights in His truth. He prays to be quickened after God’s lovingkindness, so shall he keep the testimonies of God’s mouth.

And so in prophetic language he tells us, that in the coming of CHRIST, “Mercy and truth have kissed each other;” and concludes his benediction of the same CHRIST, “Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the LORD,” with “O give thanks unto the LORD, for He is gracious and His mercy endureth for ever.” “Behold, O LORD, our defender, and look upon the face of Thine anointed.”

But now we come to the third disposition of the heart, in the order of time, before a thorough and complete repentance takes place. The sinner thus encouraged and resolved to present himself before the throne of Divine grace, and to sue for pardon through the precious Blood of the Blessed SON of GOD, betakes himself to earnest prayer, in order to obtain the necessary disposition of contrition, without which there is no admittance to mercy and grace.

We never can sufficiently bring home to ourselves the efficacy of fervent and earnest prayer. The feeblest and most corrupt heathenism bears testimony to this, that mortal man may dare to address his Maker, with the prospect of being heard. And under every fresh manifestation of the truth, this fact has become more and more evident, till, in the mediation of the SON of GOD, and in union with Him, the relation has been established in the most intimate form. "Whatever ye shall ask the FATHER in My Name, believing, ye shall receive it."

And although "God heareth not sinners," yet no condition of alienation from GOD can shut His ear to the cry of the penitent, if so be that the penitent really is in earnest. Neither the hardening process of a long course of sin, nor the enfeebling influence of a corrupt habit that has become a very second nature,

prevents the real prayer of desire entering into the courts above. In parable and precept, in direct assertion, and in implied significance, this blessed truth is ever inculcated on us, that God is "ever more ready to hear than we to pray, and is wont to give more than either we desire or deserve."

With this in our minds, let us see how the prophet king expresses himself.

Does he remember past sorrow? "Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness. Thou hast set me at liberty when I was in trouble: have mercy upon me, and hearken unto my prayer." Is he desolate with present affliction? "LORD, Thou knowest all my desire, and my groaning is not hid from Thee." Does he expect the mercy of God? "But I will make my prayer unto Thee in an acceptable time." Does he overcome an assault of the evil one? "Away from me, all ye that work vanity, for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping. The LORD hath heard my petition, the LORD will receive my prayer." Is he likely to be conquered by the evil one? "For-sake me not, O LORD my God; be not far from me. Haste Thee to help me, O LORD God of my salvation."

And specially is his prayer directed to the attainment of that renewal of heart which is

implied by the term contrition. "Make me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy Presence, and take not Thy HOLY SPIRIT from me."

"O that my ways were so direct that I might keep Thy statutes."

"Take from me the way of lying, and cause Thou me to make much of Thy law."

"O turn away mine eyes, lest they behold vanity: and quicken Thou me in Thy way."

"O quicken me after Thy loving-kindness, and so shall I keep the testimonies of Thy mouth."

"I cried unto the LORD and said, Thou art my hope and my portion in the land of the living. Consider my complaint, for I am brought very low. O deliver me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me."

"O let me hear Thy lovingkindness betimes in the morning; for in Thee is my trust. Show Thou me the way that I should walk in; for my trust is in Thee."

Now the grace of a contrite heart, which David asks for in these and similar prayers, is the condition on which all sin is forgiven to men for the sake of the merits of CHRIST. It is that sorrow for sin which proceeds from the love of God. So lovely is this beautiful grace of God, that the sympathising heart

clings even to the circumstances of the sins of those who have exercised it: I mean, that the fact of the sin comes to form an integral part in our conception of their characters, and that the absence of the sin would remove one great element of our interest in them. For example, how very much the denial, and subsequent and immediate repentance, bring out the character of S. Peter! Frail sinners that we are, we love him all the better for his sin, because it brings him nearer to our sympathies. Others, again, are, as it were, penitent, or nothing. Holy and devoted as the Magdalen was to her Lord, what would her history be to us, if of her it had not been recorded that her sins were forgiven her, for she loved much? *And so the penitent thief lives in our hearts, in his faith, his confession, and his contrition.

Now, in true contrition, the love of God is the animating motive. That holy fire, ever quick, ever ardent, seeks to burn up within the soul everything that opposes itself to the honour of the Supreme; warms the cold and empty chambers of the deserted heart, drives forth the vile mists engendered by sin, and lights the darkest chambers of the thoughts with its animating beams.

And on analysing it, one comes to find that it exhibits within itself these special virtues—

penitence, humility, and charity: penitence, which fills the soul with a deep hatred of sin, and a desire to destroy it at any cost; humility, which compels her to take the lowest room, and even to regard herself as a monster of ingratitude and heartlessness, in offending the good and kind God; and thirdly, charity, which is in fact nothing else but the love of God in action, in this instance manifesting itself in detestation of sin on account of its infinite contrariety to God, its outrages to the order and harmony of His beautiful Providence; and above all, the evil it wrought upon His Blessed and Only-Begotten Son.

The inspired words of the Psalmist illustrate this. His burning love for God breathes through many of his compositions; indeed, nowhere in the inspired records do we obtain so lovely an aspect of the Divine perfections as in this volume. There is—if we may say so without irreverence—a holy familiarity in David's converse with God, which prompts him to express himself in the most affectionate expressions; and every simile seems exhausted, in order to declare what complete and entire confidence he puts in Him.

“I will love Thee, O LORD, my strength :
the LORD is my strong rock and my defence ;
my SAVIOUR, my God, and my might, in Whom

I will trust; the horn also of my salvation and my refuge."

"O love the LORD, all ye His saints: for the LORD preserveth them that are faithful, and plenteously rewardeth the proud doer."

"Great peace shall they have that love Thy law, and are not ashamed at it."

And this love of God manifests itself in the same way, as has been shown above. Has he sinned? he feels his misery: "I have eaten ashes as it were bread, and mingled my drink with weeping; and that, because of Thine indignation and wrath: for Thou hast taken me up, and cast me down."

"I am weary of my groaning: every night wash I my bed, and water my couch with my tears. My beauty is gone for very trouble, and worn away because of all mine enemies." He is willing to take the lowest room. "I am small, and of no reputation. What profit is there in my blood when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust give thanks unto Thee?"

"I am feeble and sore smitten: I became as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs."

Lastly, the love of God so warms his heart, that the hatred of what opposes him extends to all that sets itself up against him. "Do I not hate them that hate Thee? and am not I

grieved with them that rise up against Thee? Yea, I hate them right sore: even as though they were mine enemies. O ye that love the LORD, see that ye hate the thing that is evil."

Now the sorrow of the heart in all sin will ever seek to manifest itself by outward and sensible signs. Every strong emotion desires to make itself recognised; and if it is a real emotion, will do so in spite of every effort. In this case that expression is not only allowed, but commanded. Contrition is not merely to rest within the soul; it must express itself by words and by deeds: by words, in confession; by deeds, in acts of restitution, discipline, and amendment.

The confession of sin is in many places of Holy Scripture attached to its forgiveness. "He that confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall have mercy;" and "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity." So S. James says: "Confess your sins one to another;" and Joshua urges Achan to give glory to God, and tell him what he hath done. "My son, give, I pray thee, glory unto the God of Israel, and make confession unto Him; and tell me what thou hast done: hide it not from me."

This manifestation of sorrow is the natural result of a deep contrition. To God we have

to say, "FATHER, I have sinned against heaven, and before Thee;" to man we have to say, "I have given scandal by such and such conduct. I acknowledge my fault in having given cause to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme; I therefore make this solemn reparation to the cause of Christian morality."

And these were the sentiments of King David: "I said, I will confess my sin unto Thee, and so Thou forgavest me the wickedness of my sin. For while I held my tongue my bones consumed away through my daily complaining. For I will confess my wickedness, and be sorry for my sin."

And in his history, when apparently he shrank from a solemn reparation of his iniquity, we find that Nathan declared to him that, as a token of the Divine vengeance, and as a vindication of public justice, his child should die.

Lastly, the test of a true repentance is amendment, and in serious cases, amendment manifested by a more humble and mortified walk for the future. The tendency of sin is to produce relapse; therefore the ordinary condition of the sinner will be that he is ever falling back into the sins he has repented of. All Christian morality opposes itself to this. He mocks God who commits again the sins that he has bewailed. Consequently, the test

of true contrition will be the cure of the offence. This, you will say, is a hard saying, and doubtless you will ask within your hearts, "Is my repentance a real one? for I find, from time to time, I fall back again into my faults. As Communion follows Communion, I have the same faults to confess to God." Now one must distinguish between wilful sins and the little frailties to which our fallen nature is liable. Into the former, we ought not to fall; into the latter we are sure to relapse. Still, it is in our power to diminish the number of these falls; and if we are really going on well, they will so diminish.

The true way to avoid this tendency to relapse into sin, is to set oneself energetically to Christian works and earnest benevolence, and to a zealous service of our Good Master. The consciousness that we have sinned and are forgiven should especially induce us to win other sinners into the way of righteousness. The sense of pardon should fill our souls with an earnest zeal and desire to evince to our compassionate LORD our deep sense of what He has done for us. We shall now live to gratitude and to love—we shall say to ourselves, I have no time for the vanities of this life. I am a forgiven child, and my one duty must now be to please my Heavenly FATHER. Thus it was with King

David. No sooner was his great sin brought home to him, and he had acknowledged his guilt in the 51st Psalm, which has been the voice of the contrite sinner ever since that day, than he adds, "Then shall I teach Thy ways unto the wicked, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee, and then Thou shalt open my lips, O LORD, and my mouth shall show Thy praise. Then shalt Thou be pleased with the sacrifice of righteousness, with the burnt-offerings and oblations, then shall they offer young bullocks on Thine altar."

And again: "Unto Thee, O God, will I pay my vows: unto Thee will I give thanks. For Thou hast delivered my soul from death and my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living."

And again: "Stand in awe and sin not; commune with your own heart and in your chamber, and be still. Offer the sacrifice of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD."

Or again: "O turn Thee then unto me, and have mercy upon me. Give strength unto Thy servant, and help the son of Thine handmaid. Show some token upon me for good, that they who hate me may see it and be ashamed: because Thou, LORD, hast holpen me and comforted me."

Lastly, the sense of pardon and absolution

will break forth into praise. As God graciously condescends to be glorified in the forgiveness of the sinner, so the sinner in his own conversion finds the fittest topic for the praise of God Most High. The work of pardon is indeed the masterpiece of God's works, greater than the creation of ten thousand worlds, for God made all these by a word ; but it has cost the Blood of His own Son to forgive and heal and cure and recreate one erring child of Adam. Consequently heart and imagination alike fail us when we think of the mercy of God manifested in sinners by the redemption of His Only Son. This forms the theme of the Apostle's ascription of praise, "Blessed be the God and FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in CHRIST;"¹ and thus S. Peter : "Blessed be the God and FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, Who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again into a lively hope by the resurrection of JESUS CHRIST from the dead."

Thus David : "O come hither and hearken, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what He hath done for my soul. I called upon Him with my mouth, and gave Him praises with my tongue."

Or again : "Praise the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me praise His holy

¹ Eph. i. 3.

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Name. Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits, Who forgiveth all thy sin and healeth all thine infirmities, Who saveth thy life from destruction and crowneth thee with mercy and loving-kindness."

Or again: "O praise the LORD, for it is a good thing to sing praises unto our God: yea, a joyful and a pleasant thing it is to be thankful."

"The LORD doth build up Jerusalem (the erring but forgiven Christian soul) and gather together the outcasts of Israel."

"He healeth those that are broken in heart, and giveth medicine to heal their sickness."

One might continue these illustrations at much greater length; but enough has been said to enable you to apply to yourselves the blessed treasure for repentant sinners which God hath given us in this holy volume. Blessed book! which hath been the consolation of every way-worn and weary heart for nearly three thousand years, which has formed the main part of the public devotions of the Church under the Jewish and the Christian dispensations, and which supplied the prayers of the Captain of our salvation Himself—Himself the Exemplar of penitents, though He did no sin, aiding Him even in that hour of conquest and of shame, of death and of eternal life, in the ineffable hour of His Crucifixion.

SERMON III.

PENITENCE.

PSALM XC. 8.

“THOU HAST SET OUR MISDEEDS BEFORE THEE : OUR SECRET SINS IN THE LIGHT OF THY COUNTENANCE.”

It is of the essential perfection of God, that “He beholdeth all things that are both in the heaven and the earth.” It is His attribute to be immense, uncircumscribed, and omnipresent. “He filleth heaven and earth.” Being a pure Spirit, He penetrates all bodies, and is within them. It is impossible to imagine any place or any point where God is not. “If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there; if I go down into hell, Thou art there also. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me.” Wherever anything is, beyond the ut-

termost regions of space, there God is ; there the HOLY TRINITY is wholly present ; there the FATHER is eternally begetting the SON, and the FATHER and the SON producing the HOLY SPIRIT ; there are infinite goodness and charity, mercy and justice, wisdom and omnipotence ; there are all the excellences and the perfections of the Deity ; there, in short, is God, by His Essence, by His Presence, by His power.

God is the life of all existences. "He is not far from any one of us, for in Him we live, and move, and have our being."¹ He beholds and knows whatever is in each one. Nothing is hid or concealed from Him. "The darkness is no darkness to Him, but the night is as clear as the day." Does a man pray, God is present with him to see him in secret. Is a man tempted, God is there, to Whom wickedness is hateful. Is a man afflicted, God is there to succour him in the time of need. Is a man intent on working out his salvation with fear and trembling, God is there to sift the motives, and to strengthen the weak hands, and to crown with His everlasting reward.

In heaven, then, and in earth,—in the radiant courts of heaven, in the abode of the departed souls, in the depths of the nethermost hell,—in the height above and in the abyss be-

¹ Acts xvii. 27.

neath,—in the waste places of the desert and in the crowded thoroughfares of the haunts of man,—in throngs and in the solitude of the sick chamber,—nay, in the inmost recesses of the being of each individual soul of man, is the eternal and unsearchable God : more intimately present within these than is the spirit of man within his body ; more entirely surrounding these than does the great ocean the living creatures that take their pastime therein, is the **BEING** of beings. Were He to withdraw His Presence one moment, they would fall back into their original nothingness. It is His indwelling that sustains them in force and vigour. He is at once the cause and the final end of all things. “ For Thy pleasure they are and were created.”

Furthermore, God is eternal. Time has nothing to do with Him, so infinitely is He above it. As the traveller resting on some high eminence comprehends in one glance many of the objects in the plain below, which at a lower elevation are never seen at once ; so, from the fastness of His own eternity, God sees stretched before Him the past, present, and future of every age. Times and seasons to us roll on ; institutions are evolved, culminate, and come to decay ; nations arise, and are great, and perish by the great law of Providence ; worlds

fulfil their mission in the behests of Omnipotence, and cease to occupy their place within the heavens ; but He, the Unchangeable, is as He hath been for ever. To Him is no yesterday or to-morrow. Age and time, space and extension, causation and the end, are all eternally present to His cognitions.

Now a consequence of the prescience and eternity of God will be, that He hath no need of memory. Accidentally we talk of God remembering things, but this is a mere condescendence to our finite capacities. He need remember nothing, for all things are perpetually in His mind. The fall of the angels is to Him as the events of yesterday ; the creation of the universe and its judgment and doom co-exist within His Divine intelligence. A thousand years to Him are as one day. Every event that ever has taken place—the formation of the firmament, the adaptation of a thousand worlds for the ends for which they were created,—and in the case of our own earth, every event in its history, the creation, and the fall, and the flood, and the call of the chosen people, and their trial and reprobation, and the election of the Church, and the history of the world and the stream of time, and the judgment of the world by fire,—are all actually present to His sight.

He sees the end of a thing before it is conceived in the heart. He traces out the first co-operation with His grace in the human heart, till it brings forth its fruit in the garner of heaven. He follows the favoured soul through all the discipline of life, laying on trial where it is necessary, administering consolation where it is required, till that soul is presented beautiful and without spot in the world of bliss. He follows the course of the world, and sees the end of all its political events, which He overrules to good by the exercise of His Providence. He knows what the free-will of each man will determine, and what the end of that determination will be. But though cognizant of the passions, and turmoils, and sins of an erring universe, yet He remaineth passionless, sinless, and serene, in the eternity of that unspeakable repose wherein He hath rested and rejoiced from the beginning.

“Thou hast set our misdeeds before Thee : our secret sins in the light of Thy Countenance.”

But, my brethren, the fact of the Eternity and Omnipresence of God is not sufficient to account for the words of the text. It is true that by those attributes God does witness every crime, and sin, and shortcoming that ever has been or shall be committed ; but this does not

fill up the measure of the fulness of the meaning of my text. When *sin* is concerned, something more is concerned than the very nature of God Himself. Nor is this to be wondered at; for sin is that which is the opposite of God, and would dethrone Him, and would, if it could, make Him cease to be God! Where sin is concerned, there is a special act of the will on the part of God, in the way of His everlasting remembrance. The words are not "Our misdeeds are before Thee, and our secret sins are in the light of Thy Countenance," but "Thou hast set;" Thou, Who canst do all things, and Who doest nothing without a purpose, and Whose slightest action is the action of the all-heavy hand of Omnipotence, "*hast set* our misdeeds before Thee."

Let us see how this should be.

The well-being of all creation consists in conformity to God's law. All things out of God must, as a condition of their happiness, obey that fixed rule which we term the law of their being,—a law imposed by the Supreme Being, and as such, His determinate will. "Of" this "law there can be no less acknowledged, than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world. All things in heaven and earth do her homage; the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not ex-

empted from her power. Both angels and men, and creatures of what condition soever, though cast in a different sort and manner, yet all with uniform consent admire her as the mother of their peace and joy."¹ Even the heathen acknowledged this. "There shall not be one law at Rome, and another at Athens; one now, another in the future: but a law, one, eternal and immutable, shall control all nations and all times, and God Himself shall be the common Master and Ruler over all. He is the inventor, administrator, and enforcer of that law; and whosoever obeyeth it not, loseth the power of himself, and being untrue to the nature of man, shall by the very disobedience suffer the most fearful penalties, though he may escape the other punishments which belong to the crime."²

Now this law of God being thus important, it is evident that its infraction must be a most serious matter. That it may be broken is a consequence of the free-will of the creature; and this depraved exercise of the free choice of the creature is the very essence and principle of sin. The law must exist before there is deflection from it; and the creature, angel or man, as the case may be, must have the power of deflecting from, or adhering to it. Conse-

¹ Hooker, lib. i. ad fin.

² Cic. de Repub. ap. Lactant.

quently, given an eternal law of right, and a world of creatures who may obey or disobey that law, we have the phenomenon of the world as it is.

“Sin then is the transgression of the law,” and the first proof which we get of its heinousness is a terrible result that ensues from it. The sin passes away in the commission, but not before it has generated a consequence which must last for ever. Not closer than the shadow follows on the substance does guilt follow upon sin; and this guilt is nothing less than a debt or obligation to suffer a punishment proportionable to the iniquity of the sin. The sin passes away with its motives and incentives, and keen delight, and its temporal consequence, and its sharp remorse, or its triumphant satisfaction; but the guilt remains for ever. There it is, recorded in God’s Book against the judgment day. Years may elapse, and circumstances may change, and the passions which led to the crime may die out, and fresh objects may have diverted the thoughts from the past. Nay, the very memory may have failed to retain a single trace of the unholy act, and yet the guilt remains; and thus it is that God hath set our misdeeds before Him and our secret sins in the light of His countenance. Although sin is in one sense a negation—a privation—the absence of good,

and thus has not been created either by the good God or by any inferior being, yet this terrible fact of the perpetration of guilt gives it almost a substantial existence.¹ We find in the old law of Moses that evil acts, without reference to the criminality of the agent, drew down a curse upon the land; that even the accidental homicide had to be atoned for by spiritual sacrifices; and that where no criminal could be fixed upon as the actual perpetrator, the authorities of the nearest city were bound to ceremonies of expiation. Indeed, the whole theory of the Mosaic dispensation, dimly shadowing out as it did, the deepest truths of the dealings between God and man, went upon the principle of a substantial dishonour being done to God by every infraction of His law, which dishonour deserved the severest punishment, and remained treasured up within the abysses of the Divine recollection, until adequate satisfaction was made for it.

Can we wonder then, that the Bible being a record of the history of the most favoured part of the human race, should, after all, be but a record of crime? When we think how from the earliest times of the human race, the free will of man has set itself in opposition to the sovereign Will of God, is it to be wondered at,

¹ S. Thos. 1a 2æ, 72, 1.

that the inspired documents should put before us a series of pictures of iniquity, which, recorded in the mind of God, are also written for our admonition in that manifestation of His mind which He has so graciously vouchsafed to us? Take the earliest book of the Bible. The prevarication of our first parents—the murder of their eldest born—the polygamy of Lamech—the drunkenness of Noah—the pride of the giants—the corruption of the whole earth—the ambition of Babel—the pollution of the cities of the plain—the wickedness of the seven nations of Canaan—the violence of Esau—the fraud of Jacob—the domestic miseries and crimes of his family—are but samples of the festering mass of human sin which is stored in the memory of God, and the history of which He has communicated to us, lest we should fall into the same condemnation. And this is but a sample of the rest of the sacred Narrative, and the sacred Narrative is but a sample of what the rest of the world's doings has been. Attempt but for a moment to realize this, and then conceive how the very soul of God the Son must be burdened with the contemplation of the accumulated mass of the woe of an universe—the woe of guilt, and sin, and condemnation, and defilement—the intensity and malignity of which none but He

can know. "Thou hast set our misdeeds before Thee, and our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance."

But now to apply this to ourselves.

We must premise as a truth, that it is not in the order of God's Providence that one sin can be remitted to us apart from the rest. As no deadly sin can be forgiven without grace and penitence, and as grace and penitence are incompatible with any other sin, it follows that one sin cannot be remitted by itself. He is not a true penitent who is only sorry for one sin and not for the rest, for if the one sin were really displeasing to him on the supernatural motion of the love of God, all would be alike hateful to him.

In looking back therefore on our past lives, we must have either repented of all, or we must have the sins of a whole life standing against us in God's books! We are either in a justified state, or in a state of condemnation, and the test will be—do we really sorrow of all the sins of our past lives? And whether we repent or remain hardened, what a tremendous record is that which God has against us! It is tremendous if in loving regret we view it in the spirit of contrition as our evil requital of all God's mercies towards us—it is more tremendous, if it actually be the un-

paid debt of which the justice of God must exact the uttermost farthing. In either case it is most awful. I pray you now to come with me and enter seriously into your own hearts and see what you find there. Follow out the whole course of your spiritual lives from the first loss of baptismal grace and the first deliberate choice of evil for good, down through all the descents of increasing sin, and strengthened evil habits, and developed passions till you stand where you stand to-day. Trace out how evil thoughts have grown into yet more evil desires, and these worse desires have worked themselves out in corresponding actions ; follow out how the suggestion of the evil one has first met with involuntary delight, and that involuntary delight has yielded to deliberate consent, and so “when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” Remember how in the course of years the conscience has become gradually weakened, till after many warnings unheeded, it has ceased to indicate the approaching danger, and to record that the danger has been encountered. Notice how sin after sin has wound itself round you—at first hated—then tolerated—then loved for its own sake, and at last, in all its hideous deformity, become a very part and parcel of your nature. Observe how actions, of which the first

proposal would call forth such an expression as "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" have come at last to be perpetrated without scruple and without remorse. See how indulgence has weakened the will, till the power of resistance has vanished, and as sure as the temptation comes, a fall comes along with it. Pursue the corruption of every sense and faculty of body and soul which have been perverted to the powers of evil,—the obscuring of the inward light, the perversion of the reason, the pollution of the imagination, the burdening of the memory with unhallowed recollections, till the whole regenerate nature has been marred and deteriorated.

Or, apply another process to your conscience, and like king Hezekiah go over all your years in the bitterness of your soul. Sum up, how year after year has added to the tale of your sins: try to remember how every evil habit is but a galaxy of single, individual rebellions against God, though so closely studded together that they have ceased to be discerned as such. Yet each of these thus forming the habit has been a completed sin, sufficient of itself to destroy the soul, and therefore to be watched, to be repented of, to be forsaken now and for ever. O how fearful is the burden of remembered transgression! What is it that

drives so many to the miserable consolations of intemperance but the desire to drown care and recollection in the oblivion of intoxication? Why is it that in the case of sins of a lighter nature, we see men plunging into the excitement of society, but that they cannot face the huge mass of unrepented iniquity with which their memories are charged? Why do we find systems of religion commending themselves to men, in which assurance is held out to the sinner, or a fancied security obtained by some miserable opiate of false doctrine, but that men have not got the heart really to see how they stand in God's sight, and having done so, to apply to themselves by true repentance the Blood of their merciful Redeemer? Such self-deceivers little think that though they may drown the thought of their sin, God has still set their misdeeds before Him, and that He is writing terrible things against them, while they imagine that they are quite secure. But do not wander to the case of others, from your own condition, my brethren. Examine yourselves, how *you* stand in God's sight. What picture does memory hold up to *you*? Take your own part, and try to see it as God sees it. What were those sins you committed so many years ago? The early self-indulgence of the nursery, the trivial disobediences of your tender

years, the waywardness and obstinacy of the schoolroom, the first motions of personal vanity listened to and consented to, the rebellions against the authority of your parents and guardians, the lies to screen faults or even to implicate others, the quarrellings with your companions, the evil communications of unholy knowledge and the promptings of unholy curiosity, the listening to the whisperings of the passions, the irretrievable fall when innocence is lost for ever, the plunge into the vanities of the world, the delight in the company of sinners and the miserable hypocrisy of wishing to be thought worse than you were, the indulgence in the pleasures of sense, the fixing of the interests on this life, the generation of ambition and of covetousness within the soul; the habits of these evil dispositions, together with lying when convenient, and fraud when expedient, and cruelty when driven to it, and wretched selfishness at all hours and at all times;—do these still stand against you? are these indeed your misdeeds set before God? are these indeed some of your secret sins placed by Him in the light of His countenance?

Or take the sins of omission,—the prayers languidly said, or repeated formally, or actually neglected; opportunities of Communion on which you have turned your back, the poor you

have sent away unrelieved, the good example you have failed to set to others, the scandal which your unedifying ways have given, the connivance at evil which your countenance has afforded, the indifferentism which you have advocated by implication, the good which you have failed to do when you had opportunity, the shirking of duty when it was set distinctly before you, the refusal to bear the cross when it was laid upon you ;—are these still in God's sight, or are you justified from them by a true and perfect contrition ?

Believe me, the mere lapse of time is no cure for sin, either as regards its guilt, its pollution, or its punishment. The sins of ten, or twenty, or fifty years ago, are just as fresh in God's sight as on the day or night in which they were committed, unless you have destroyed them by penitence, and washed them out in the Blood of the LAMB. It matters not that your memory is now treacherous, and that you have forgotten ten thousand of the occasions of your iniquity. God forgets them not ; they are there in His mind as a witness against you, even as they are still within yourselves, though you detect not their presence. They are still within you, rankling within your spiritual nature, and by their unconscious presence bringing you to destruction both of body and soul. They are there

giving intensity to the assaults of the evil one, and increased facility to the inroad of temptation. They are there inclining you to fresh sin of their own kind, or to iniquities of the very opposite nature. They are there defiling the soul, and turning the very graces of God into poison, and making what should be for your spiritual health an occasion of falling. They are there to bear witness against you at the very bar of Divine justice ; for while you have forgotten them, and while so far as you can recollect they are as though they had never been, God has set your misdeeds before Him, and your secret sins in the light of His countenance.

But, my brethren, there is a sense in which these words do not breathe mere terror and dismay into the sinner's heart ; nay, in which they speak to him of unspeakable mercy and of love stronger than death ! Strange as it may seem to you, had not God one night set our misdeeds before Him and our secret sins in the light of His countenance, we should have still been "Syrians ready to perish," still under the law and not under grace, still liable to the curse and penalty of sin, still unredeemed. For when was it that this took place but in that awful hour, when prostrate before His FATHER, in the garden of Gethsemane, the meek, and holy, and innocent Son of God, bathed in

a sweat of blood, wrung miraculously from His Divine veins for very horror and sorrow, bore the guilt, and the shame, and the remorse and the penance of all the sins of a guilty world! Come with me in spirit into that cold midnight scene. Above shines the full paschal moon, around rustle the olive-trees, shaken by the keen north wind of the springtide; hard by are the forms of the sleeping disciples, and from the distance comes the hum of the populous city, now settling itself to rest after the excitement of the day of festival; there, stretched upon the earth, lies the Divine Victim, amazed and very heavy, with soul sorrowful unto death, as one by one the accumulated mass of the transgressions of an universe are laid upon His sinless head. What an hour of sorrow to Him in Whom the FATHER was well pleased, to have to endure the burden of the crimes of the worst of sinners! What a moment, for the sinless God to be implicated in the vilest of sins! And yet this has been our salvation. The unknown sorrows of Gethsemane have been the cause of the penitent's joy, and instead of the voice of condemnation that GOD hath set his misdeeds before Him, and his secret sins in the light of His countenance, the sinner now hears the gracious words: "Remember these, O Jacob, and Israel: for thou art My servant.

I have formed thee ; thou art My servant :
O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of Me.
I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy
transgressions :

And as a cloud thy sins.

Return unto Me, for I have redeemed thee.

Sing, O ye heavens, for the LORD hath done it.

Shout, ye lower parts of the earth :

Break forth into singing, ye mountains, and
forest, and every tree therein :

For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and
glorified Himself in Israel."

1

SERMON IV.

ELIJAH'S SACRIFICE.

1 KINGS XVIII. 20.

"SO AHAB SENT UNTO ALL THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL,
AND GATHERED THE PROPHETS TOGETHER UNTO MOUNT
CARMEL."

IF magnificence of situation and dramatic energy of action form the best inducements for the painter's choice, I can conceive no subject for the highest art more eligible than the sacrifice of Elias on Mount Carmel. Imagine the arid summit of the mountain promontory, crowded with the ten thousands of Israel: to the right is one of the richest valleys of the promised land, then parched and crumbling with the protracted drought: to the left is the wide expanse of the beautiful azure sea. In the centre of the multitude is the glittering court of the Israelitish king; and by him, with all the pomp and brilliancy of their attractive

worship, the four hundred and fifty priests of Baal, the sun-god—of him whom all heathen nations have worshipped as the symbol of the generating power of nature, either as the Surya of the Hindu belief, or the bright and splendid Phœbus Apollo of the classic idolatries of Greece and Rome.

In a space by himself, shunned by the court, looked askance on by the multitude, stands the fervid prophet of God. He has challenged Baal to the old trial by ordeal. Whichever sacrifice is kindled by fire from heaven is to decide the cause. He has given the idolaters such a test as they cannot complain of. Of course the sun-god can send down his rays to consume the sacrifice offered in his name. They accept the challenge. The victim is placed upon the impious altar at an early hour, and their god, as he rises over the eastern horizon, is hailed with the odour of incense, and the shout of joy, and the clang of the cymbal.

They continue their supplications from morning even until noon, saying, "O Baal, hear us." Baal shines down upon the scene, but no smoke issues from the high place. The excitement increases—the multitude becomes impatient: that strange, indescribable sensation which penetrates a crowd bent on one object

thrills through every individual that goes to constitute it. The priests begin to tremble for their master's credit. Ordinary means have failed. In a burst of enthusiasm "they leap upon the altar which was made." Elijah stands by and taunts them. "The sun-god is talking, or pursuing, or on a journey; or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awaked."

Like the Eastern fanatics of the present day, with frantic cries and wild dances, cutting their flesh with knives and lancets, they conjure their god to manifest his powers. But Baal in his meridian splendour hears not. The altar is untouched. Still they continue their invocations all the afternoon, till at last the orb of day sinks towards the western waves.

Then begins the work of Elias. First he summons the people to him, that they may suspect no trick or juggling; then he calmly and quietly repairs the altar that had been broken down; then he lays on the victim, and causes water in large quantities to be poured upon the sacrifice. A brief and simple prayer is offered to the God of Israel—fire flashes down from heaven, and consumes sacrifice, and altar, and all, licking up the water in the trench—the people recognise the Hand of God, and amid their contrition and self-abasement the moral influence of Baal is overthrown in

Israel. "And when the people saw it they fell on their faces and said, The LORD He is the God, the LORD He is the God."

Such is the narrative of this mighty event; it is our duty to consider what lessons are to be derived from it so as to improve our own conduct; and—

1st, with regard to the state of the Israelites on whose behalf the miracle was wrought. Though they had fallen away from the orthodox Church of David to the worship of the groves and of the calves in Dan and Bethel, they had not absolutely apostatized from the faith in the True God. This is implied in Elijah's address to them. "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him."

Theodoret mentions that they were in the mixed condition of adoring the True God, and at the same time sacrificing to idols. This of course was wrong; for the law of Moses expressly forbade an alliance so monstrous, and it was only a repetition of the Jewish tradition upon the subject, when our LORD enunciated in a more spiritual sense than had ever been said before, "No man can serve two masters: ye cannot serve God and mammon."

And yet the condition of the Israelitish people too well describes the condition of many

a Christian now. God and Baal, and God and mammon, (in other words, religion and self-indulgence, or religion and money-making,) occupy the divided hearts of many men. They need a little religion to quiet their consciences, and they compound for the carnal mind, or the worldly heart, or the ungoverned temper, or any other bosom sin, by the strict performance of some part of their religious service. And with these may be classed the more unfortunate class who are religious *all but* in some one point, the whole of whose conduct is good, upright, and devoted, who are fervid, zealous, loving, benevolent, and the like, yet who fail in the one point in which God really tries them—in the besetting sin, or predominant passion, the subjugation of which is the mark of their predestination.

To both these classes the Christian preacher has to express, in the strongest terms, the danger and the folly of this amalgamation. God is a jealous God, and demands an undivided heart; and though Baal temples, and Mammon temples, and perhaps Molech temples may at present exist within our souls, our salvation depends upon their eventual destruction: for “no man can serve two masters.”

The next point that I would call your attention to is the strength which a good cause gives

to its advocate. "Then said Elijah to the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men." How firm must have been the prophet's faith, when it remained entire in the midst of a tendency to universal apostasy. We are all so affected by the opinions of those round about us, that it requires great strength of mind to maintain strong convictions opposite to the belief of those with whom we habitually live. It is still more difficult to maintain one's faith in a falling cause; and yet, if ever cause seemed to be a falling one, it was the cause of JEHOVAH in the days of Ahab. And if it be difficult to maintain one's inward convictions uninjured under these circumstances, how much more hard is it to assert them in the teeth of a hostile or fanatical public opinion. There are times when peoples go mad with political or religious excitement, and a hard task has the man who will not float with the stream. Abuse and obloquy will be his lot if he escape personal violence; and yet, if he has truth on his side, in the end he will conquer. Nay, even if people do not come round to his views, his consistency will carry its own reward with it, and he will have above all the comfort of a good conscience, and the satisfaction that he has borne witness to the great martyr-principle of

Christianity,—the moral obligation that lies on every believer to assert, and to be ready to suffer for, his convictions. “Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I also confess before My FATHER Which is in heaven; and whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I deny before My FATHER Which is in heaven.” In all such cases, the circumstances of the fearless Elijah’s consistency and faith should form subjects of strength and holy hope to the advocate of every righteous cause, however hopeless its apparent prospects may be.

We have now to allude to that peculiarity of the scene, which no doubt has struck every one in the perusal of this striking chapter,—I mean the taunts and sarcasms which Elijah launched with such telling keenness against Baal and his votaries. “And it came to pass that at noon,” when the sun-god was blazing down in his meridian glory upon the sacrifice, that “Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.” This shows one the legitimate use of sarcasm and ridicule: to discountenance wickedness and folly, Almighty God has implanted in all minds, though in very different degrees, a sense of the ludicrous. Because God has implanted it in a nature ori-

ginally good, we may be sure that it is there for a righteous purpose, although we daily see it perverted to the injury of the character. Where it is exercised on poverty, misfortune, or physical deformity, it is in the highest degree wrong; in the strong words of inspiration such an one reproacheth his Maker. Even where it is not indulged on improper objects, there is a danger of viewing the affairs of this life too exclusively in a ridiculous light, as it tends to destroy that seriousness which is the usual mark of a really noble character. It has also the effect of marring the innate reverence of the heart, and destroys the appreciation of the poetical aspects of nature, which God no doubt implanted in us to raise our hearts to Him. But still there is a legitimate use of sarcasm or wit, just as there is an improper one. All sin, being founded on a fallacy, has its intensely ridiculous aspect. Wickedness, in fact as well as in expression, is too often synonymous with folly. Vulgarities, which consists in the assumption of a place not one's own; underbreeding, which is the want of a delicate sense of what is due to others; conceit, ostentation, and many other sins of this kind, are better treated by ridicule than by graver reproof; and even the more serious vices and iniquities are sometimes as effectually checked by the exhi-

bition of their absurdity, as by the denunciation of their foulness. The description of the carpenter making the idol in the prophet Isaiah illustrates what I mean ; and the power of an able, religious man in society, who can wield the weapon of sarcasm in the service of God, cannot be too highly estimated.

Altogether, there is a great deal in these days of false refinement which we may get from the character of Elijah. Elijah was not the man to let the world go on in its self-satisfied, smooth way, without rebuking it. If ever man took up his testimony against the evil ways of a corrupt age, it was this stern and uncompromising penitentiary. "Art thou he which troubleth Israel?" was the salutation with which the king greeted this forerunner of the Becketts, the Anselms, and the Gregories of the middle age. And in one sense he did trouble Israel : he would not suffer the nation to glide down the course of destruction, without seeking to arrest that miserable progress. He would not suffer Israel to forget the living God in the profane dances, and glittering processions, and sensual rites of the accursed heathens. Nay, feeling that the only way to recover his lost countrymen was to invoke the judgments of God upon them, he had moved the ALMIGHTY to withhold the fertilising rain

of heaven, in token of His heavy displeasure. Famine in the East ever follows drought. The rulers of the kingdom, anxious for the temporal prosperity of the people, knew not what to do. They imputed the just punishment of their own sins to the officious zeal of the prophet. No wonder that Ahab said, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" And the same accusation will be brought against any earnest and uncompromising advocate of the truth of God.

There is something very irritating to the world in the assertion of the exclusive claims of religion. The world has no objection to a tame, moderate sort of religion, which throws a veil of decency over its equivocal transactions; but whenever the majesty of God's law stands forth in the ineffable dignity of its own position, straightway the world hates it. The hatred of the world was made the test of true religion by the SAVIOUR of the world. "Marvel not if the world hate you." Yea, He goes so far as to denounce a woe upon those of whom all men speak well, as if there was something essentially fallacious in the world's judgment even when the world had hit upon good and honest qualities as the subject of its admiration. And if His teaching conveyed this lesson, what a startling commentary on it were the circumstances of His own most holy life. Though He con-

formed Himself to the external usages of that society in which He lived, and gave no handle to the adversary by anything like eccentricity, coming eating and drinking, as the Gospel declares ; yet there was something so alien from the spirit of the world in all that He taught and did, that the world hated Him with a perfect hatred. His whole public life was a denunciation of the world on His part, and a persecution of Him, on the world's part. The many changes of His abode mentioned in the holy Gospels were as often to escape the malice of His enemies, as to keep the law in attending the feasts, or to wander through the country for the express object of preaching.

This uncompromising opposition between CHRIST and the world—between the Church and the age, needs very much to be insisted on in the present day, because from the general refinement, from the increased appreciation of the secular advantages (irrespective of its real end) which Christianity has given to the world, while the surface of the world has assumed a Christian aspect, it is much to be feared that religion itself has become very worldly, that the fine gold has become dim, and its lustre perished, as the breath of this life has passed over its surface. While we have reason to thank God for the decency which beyond any age distin-

guishes society from the court downward, one cannot conceal from oneself that instances of high and self-denying holiness are very rare, and when they do occur, very bitter is the decent world against them. If we look at our politics, while we find a great awakening of the national sense of right, and observe a legislature usefully occupying itself in many measures for the common happiness, we miss that stern adherence to principle, and that resistance to popular clamour which distinguished the parties in the state in former times, when great principles, either of liberty or absolutism, were the watchwords of the struggle. And so with regard to individual religion, while we hail that improved attention to the externals of religion, and appreciate that greater respect paid to its claims, which characterize the present century, we desiderate those striking fruits of the HOLY SPIRIT which marked the earlier ages. Where do we find now the deep and heartfelt repentances, the instances of the broken and contrite hearts, of the holy self-revenge, indignation, and zeal, which the annals of the early Church so frequently place before us? Where is the earnest love to God in CHRIST, which prompted men to bear the glad tidings of salvation to the most distant and savage lands, and to risk fortune, friends, yea, life itself, in the end to be found in

Him? Where is that tender love of souls, which has induced the learned and the great to condescend from their high condition, and to devote themselves to the care of CHRIST's poor and His little ones, in meekness and lowliness and faith? Where is that Samaritan-like compassion which has sent the most tender and highly nurtured into the squalid wards of the lazarette or hospital to bind the wound and to cleanse the ulcer, and to smooth the pillow for the sake of JESUS CHRIST? If this be not an age of great vices, it is not one of heroic virtues. If there be not the darkness of the middle ages, it exhibits not the bright lights of those times of the second youth of the human race. If we have to thank GOD that we are spared the rapine, and the violence, and the hatred of GOD of the past, we have still to pray Him to send forth His Spirit to renew the face of the earth.

The character and mission of Elias form a significant commentary on these things; they also speak to us with regard to our individual selves. Elias represents one great side of the Christian character—the side of uprightness, and truth, and sternness, and austerity, and testimony to the faith. There is another and an opposite phase, that of love and gentleness, and meekness, and patient suffering, and the turning the

cheek to the smiter. Both these must co-exist in the perfect Christian, and as people's natural dispositions are, so they should watch themselves accordingly. Men of a naturally harsh disposition will find that their trial is to make themselves gentle and meek. Men of a yielding facile temper will find their probation to be the painful adherence to some stiff principle. Grace will always be in the opposite scale from nature, but, as a general rule, in these days of softness and refinement, the masculine character of true religion is too apt to be forgotten. Yet in every day do some trials come of this sort. Hardly a week passes, even in our drawing-rooms and places of social intercourse, where we may not have to fight the battle of God on a small scale.

In this spirit then, let us meditate upon the example of Elias. While we brace up the nerves of our souls after his example, let us take comfort to ourselves in his glorious reward. A life of unexampled confessorship for God, was crowned with an end of unexampled glory. An exception was made in the almost universal law of nature, and the death which had passed upon all men touched not him. What has become of him we know not. Whether he has been relegated to the earthly paradise as some have fancied—or has been retained in some secret

place of the ALMIGHTY again to re-appear, as one of the two witnesses at the end of the world—whether he has been corporally assumed into heaven in a manner similar to the ascension of CHRIST :—these are questions which we cannot answer ; but this we do know : that his assumption is a pledge of the glories of the future state, as his life on earth is a token that God will never abandon His true servants, nor suffer those who fight on His side to be worsted or confounded.

“O Elias, how wast thou honoured in thy wondrous deeds ! and who may glory like unto thee

“Who wast taken up in a whirlwind of fire and in a chariot of fiery horses.

“Who wast ordained for reproofs in their times, to pacify the wrath of the LORD’s judgment, before it broke forth into fury, and to turn the heart of the father unto the son, and to restore the tribes of Jacob.

“Blessed are they that saw thee, and slept in love : for we shall surely live.”

SERMON V.

THE REWARD OF THE WORK.

GAL. VI. 7, 8.

“BE NOT DECEIVED. GOD IS NOT MOCKED. FOR WHATSOEVER A MAN SOWETH, THAT SHALL HE ALSO REAP. FOR HE THAT SOWETH TO THE FLESH, SHALL OF THE FLESH REAP CORRUPTION, BUT HE THAT SOWETH TO THE SPIRIT SHALL OF THE SPIRIT REAP LIFE EVERLASTING.”

IN spite of all the glories of man, there is in human nature a deep element of frailty. Made originally very good by the Omniscient Creator, the fall has crippled him both in soul and spirit. His keen, bright intellect is liable to error, his will to vacillation and inconstancy, his affection to wanderings and hankerings after unworthy objects. Moreover, by the constitution of his trial, he is most assaulted where he ought to be most upright, and it is with

regard to the highest things that this failure of his powers chiefly manifests itself.

When, then, ALMIGHTY God is about to announce a fundamental law of His government, He, knowing well the peculiar tendency to error in this respect, that man shall fail in his intellect, premises it by the injunction, "Be not deceived." As if He said, "I warn thee, O wayward and rebellious work of Mine hands, not to let thy self-love deceive and preach to thee an easier command than that which I lay upon thee. Have I said, and shall I not do it? Have I commanded and shall it not be done? God is not mocked."

God has enunciated an absolute law of mercy and justice, in the fulfilment of which the creature finds its happiness, in the neglect and infraction of which, its ruin; that creature must not deceive itself by thinking that He only threatens without the intention of fulfilling what He has said, or by imagining that his own is an exceptional case. The word of the Lord endureth for ever. "Be not deceived. God is not mocked."

Now what is this great law of God? It is the mighty and deep law of retribution—of retribution in body and soul. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." Whatsoever—both in kind and in degree. The law

runs through all creation, from the natural up to the supernatural life—from the world of sensation to the world of spirits—from this earthly existence to life eternal. The *what* and the *how much* are proportionate. The wheat-seed comes not up as barley, and the scanty sowing sends not forth an abundant harvest. The acorn comes not up as the sycamore, nor does the orange seed produce the fig-tree. Each has its own crop. *What* we put into the earth, *that* we know will come back to us after many days.

Or rise into the world of man. Here the same law obtains. What man labours for, that he for the most part achieves. What man labours for, *that* he achieves, and in proportion to his labour. The years given to intellectual study do not produce the athletic champion of his country. These form the student. The keen politician does not find his meed in the peace and retirement of a learned leisure. Each man works to an end; and the appropriate end for which he works, that he obtains. He gets his own reward, and not another's.

Now let us go a step further. We have found this great law of God pervading physical and intellectual life—does it extend into the spiritual life? The text gives us the answer—“God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap; for he that

soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. The law of the natural harvest, of the intellectual harvest, of the spiritual harvest, is one; and that law is the law, so universal, so all-encircling that the heathen in their blindness supposed it a deity—Retribution.

There are two lives here below. There are two lives beyond the grave. Or rather; there are two lives which begun here below, extend by the law of their operation beyond the grave. And these are the life of the flesh and the life of the Spirit. Let us consider these, and may our Blessed LORD JESUS, the true Light, the Inspirer of Prophets, the Master of the Apostles, the teacher of Evangelists, the Crown of all Saints, direct our thoughts rightly concerning these things.

By the law of the flesh we mean that order of things which is out of God. All that is not of the Spirit is the flesh. Whatever is linked to sensation, except so far as sensation is made to minister to the supernatural life—that is the law of the flesh. It matters not whether an act come under the subdivisions of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life;

it recks not what portion of our fallen nature supplies the inward reciprocation to its outward temptation, whatsoever belongs to this life, and this life only, that is the law of the flesh.

With regard to this wide-spread field of operation, the great law holds—the law of retribution—the law of appropriate harvest, “*Whatsoever* a man soweth that shall he also reap.”

And first, there is a gross sowing to the flesh in the indulgence of the carnal desires of the flesh in their coarsest form. Not only is there retribution here, but retribution in its most evident form. The man who lives for the purpose of indulging his passions does so with effect. He makes a science of sinning. The whole powers of his mind are bent upon compassing his desires, and by the great law of life, he succeeds beyond other men. Occasions of evil, by an inscrutable mystery, present themselves to him beyond others. Success attends his efforts in evil, as we see in the luck which attends the incipient gamester. He has good fortunes (as another nation terms such offences) in his iniquity. He reaps the meed of the care, and thought, and time, and money he has expended upon his favourite faults. In the fearfully emphatic words of the Apostle, he has “made provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts

thereof." Mark those words. He has "made provision," as I have said, he has brought to bear influence, and thought, and money, and the direction of his whole intellect to fulfil his lusts, and he reaps his reward; he does fulfil his lusts, and he obtains pleasures which the good man must deny himself—pleasures more keen and more immediate than any that right reason holds out to man—pleasures which it would be unreal to say were not the devil's lures most attractively, most fascinatingly baited.

But this very harvest is what the text describes it—corruption. The very success is ruin. Linked as cause and effect with the fortunate perpetration of sin comes the destruction of all the aspiring part of man. How shall I describe the blinding of the powers of the soul, the dulling of her faculties, the embruting of the godlike part in man by thus sowing to the flesh. If there be a fearful condition in man—which must cause the angels to weep—and disturb the peace of the saints upon their emerald thrones, it is the sight of the soul of such an one as has made provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof. Gradually the natural good qualities are destroyed; the heart by degrees hardens; hate lives hard by to lust, and a cruel selfishness, a softened will, and an utter deadness to spiritual things, is the form of that cor-

ruption which he who sows to the flesh reaps even here below. And what is the condition of things when this fearful degeneracy has budded and flowered and brought forth its fruit in the world to come? What a sight will it be in the sunlight of the new creation to behold the haggard, scowling, bloated features of the victim of past sin; how fearful will it be to fix our eyes upon those hardened and deformed lineaments in which weakness and brutality, coarseness and emaciate sickliness in marvellous combination, alike have their part and portion. But what will this be to the state of their souls? The measure of iniquity has been fulfilled; not one unit from the full sum of absolute degradation is wanting,—the natural powers have been perverted—the spiritual ones are lost, gone for ever, or only exist in the increased responsibility which attends them, and nought remains but the full measure of the fruits of sin—the pain of the loss of God's presence—the agony of the undying worm, inextinguishable despair, and absolute hatred of God.

O ye who see sin adorned in its most attractive aspect, be warned in time. You cannot reverse the absolute law of God's Providence. Either here or hereafter—either in mind, body, or estate—either in vindictive justice or in most merciful chastisement, will come your retribu-

tion. "He that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption."

But not to these only does the law apply. Corruption is the harvest of him who soweth to the flesh in its least gross and alarming form. We said just now that what is not done for God—whatever belongs to this world—whatever eliminates the supernatural life and finds its end here, however refined or harmless that end may be, is still sowing to the flesh, and it follows the same great law which the Apostle says is the result of sin in its more hateful forms.

For just consider. You have given yourselves up to sow to the flesh after this fashion. You have your fortune to make, and you do so with no thought of that fortune at best being but a stewardship. You are starting in the profession of letters or art, and you forget that your pen or your pencil is a sacred instrument placed in your hand by the good God for His glory and the elevation of His creatures. You are entering on the career of politics, and you do so without a thought of the obligations of a Christian statesman. You are launched into society, and you seek to shine, from vanity and with no ambition beyond the pleasant filling up of the passing hour. You mix in the world, and you seek only to establish yourself in life,

to have a house of your own, to get a position in the world, without one thought of responsibility, or idea of obligation. Well, in all this seemingly decent occupation you have been sowing to the flesh; and the Apostle tells you that you shall have the retribution of the flesh both here and hereafter. Verily I say unto you, you shall have *your* reward. What you have sown that you shall reap. You shall rise in the world and surround yourselves with its luxuries and its comforts. You shall amuse it with your lucubrations, the product of your talent and even fame as a distinguished author. You shall intrigue, and cozen, and flatter, and tyrannize over your inferiors till you are near the top of the political tree. You shall become brilliant, and be admired and run after, and your company will be courted, and you shall be the fashion, and be in the mouths of all men. You shall attain a position and excite the envy of your less favoured sisters. In short, you shall gain all that this world can give you in proportion to your labour—the wish of your heart and the desire of your eyes. These and many things beyond your expectations shall be yours. Your natural good qualities shall merit for you from the just God many blessings which He must accord to you in this life. You shall reap a hundred fold—but of that which you

have sown. You shall live successful—but then you must die—and you shall find that not only *then* shall you reap corruption, but that all your earthly success, all your worldly advancement, all the glitter and pomp by which you have been surrounded, has been *nothing—nothing* but corruption in its most mocking, most ghastly form.

If this be so, and your own consciences will tell you that it is true, what a light this consideration throws upon the ordinary life of the public office or of the drawing room. All the refinement of modern society, the pleasing manners, the studied care to give no offence, the quick instinct of what is good taste, and the thousand other graces of a cultivated age; so far as in themselves they are not made to minister to the great end for which we were made, the glory of God, so far are they only corruption—corruption indeed gilded and disguised,—apples of Sodom, beautiful to the eye, but bitter ashes to the taste; the whited and well-adorned sepulchres of a God-forgetting and artificial civilization.

Or go a step further down in society; what is the intense preoccupation of trade, the daily and nightly race after riches, the easy self-indulgent life of the middle classes, the too full meal and the well-replenished board? What

is the daily business of this life? the farm, the mill, the factory, the shop, or the office. What are all these? legitimate and harmless, if subordinated to the great end of your being, most painful, most soul-destroying, if loved more than God, or pursued out of Him; corruption in a most insidious form—the more insidious because unseen and undetected—eating into the heart and destroying the soul.

And now to turn to the last clause of the text: "He that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." One would think that this blessed truth was so satisfactory to the heart of man, and so worthy of the kindness of God, that there would be little doubt of its acceptance. Yet it is not so. When after the long deadness of the eighteenth century, Almighty God touched the heart of the people of this country, the great truths that required to be vindicated were those which concerned the operations of God upon the soul of man.

In reaction from the dead formalism which had nipped the religious life of the residuary church drained by the secession of the Non-jurors, the point that was pressed home upon the earnest mind was the divine side in the salvation of man. The power of divine grace—the office of the SON of GOD in the justification of the sinner—the freeness and gratuitousness

of the gift of everlasting life—the mighty power of a SAVIOUR'S atoning blood—these were the heartstirring verities which roused up a dead and godless population to a sense of their religious duties. Such themes could not be without their fruits. Holiness of life, earnest self-denying service, renunciation of the world, its pomps, and luxuries, real and godly hatred of sin, were the first fruits of the mighty movement. All honour be to the noble men who warred in this holy warfare. They have gone to their rest, and being dead, yet do they speak to us.

But, as is the case in many earnest movements, there was a tendency to exaggerated and one-sided statement. Dogmatic theology, the beautiful science of God systematized by the holy doctors and saints of the Church, had no charms for men who were too much in earnest to look beyond the present hour, or to select a finer weapon than that which lay nearest to their hand. Accordingly certain truths were dwelt upon to the exclusion and suppression of others. The analogy of the faith was vitiated—the beauteous and harmonious proportions of the truth were distorted—the whole results of the union of the natures of God and man in the Person of the Word were pared down to the mystery of the Passion—the belief in the visibility of the Church and of her super-

natural graces was of the faintest kind—the corporate aspect of Christianity was subordinated to the consciousness of individual believers; and because other aspects of truth did not harmonize with the preconceived notions of the advocates of these views, they were suppressed or ignored. The changes were rung upon a few favourite texts; and when any other part of the Holy Scripture was alluded to, it came to the unaccustomed ear as strange as another Gospel.

Of these forgotten truths, none was so much suppressed as the doctrine of the reward of good actions. In fact, the whole truth of the co-operation of man with divine grace was greatly obscured. “Faith only” became the formula of the expression of the new views, and to renounce oneself and one’s own merits was esteemed as the highest advance in the spiritual life. Founded in such solemn truths of our holy religion; as the grievous injury inflicted on human nature by the fall, and the constant operation of God upon the soul; these ideas were pushed to such a degree that they became erroneous. A new theory which put the feeling of confidence in place of the righteousness of the new law was the result of this imperfect philosophy; and a modified reproduction of ancient errors took place, which made faith the

only meritorious virtue, want of it the only damning sin, and which, (worse than the laxest casuistry that ever disgraced the schools,) tended to obscure the notions of Christian obedience, to subordinate religious practice, and the endurance of the daily cross, to sentiment and to feeling, and to eliminate from the ordinary motives of the Christian the constraining one of a judgment according to the works.

In the great revival of Christian truth which our own days have seen, much of this has been mended. The awful morality of the Christian religion has re-asserted itself so far as the negative part of the truth is concerned. Men no longer sop their consciences by believing that anything of our own can take the place of repentance, and righteousness, and the fear of God. The lurking error which used to teach that if a man only died happy he was quite safe, has left our pulpits, though it still strongly possesses the uneducated mind of the people, and our efforts at the hour of death are now directed, not to excite the fancy or to lull the conscience, but to deepen the repentance and quicken the perceptions of the dying servant of God. But I question whether men sufficiently bring home to themselves the positive aspect of this truth. "He that soweth to the *Spirit*, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." They will not dare to

say that everlasting life is a reward—and that reward a proportionate one.

Now I would not for a moment be misunderstood. This truth in no way infringes upon the blessed one of justification by faith properly understood. In the redemption of man, **JESUS CHRIST** is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Out of Him can no one step be taken, no one act performed, that hath reference to everlasting life. It is only as one with Him that we can do anything pleasing to God. He it is Who by His Spirit prevents and assists us. He makes us both to will and to do of His good pleasure, first inspiring us with the wish to do well, and when we have corresponded therewith, crowning *His own act in us* with everlasting life. Mark those words—*His own act*. **CHRIST** is the source and cause of all good action; but that action is *in us*; we have our part to do as well as our **LORD**; we are fellow labourers with Him; we are labourers together with God, as the Apostle bears witness, (1 Cor. iii. 9,) “And every one shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.” Now take the Apostle at his own word. It is the voice of the **HOLY GHOST**, “He that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” He shall sow, as I said before; he shall reap both in

degree and in *kind*. In *degree* he will reap in proportion. He that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly; and he that soweth plentifully shall reap plentifully. A scanty obedience will produce a scanty reward: scanty, both here and hereafter; scanty in the graces and comforts accorded by the Blessed Spirit of God as the consolation of our pilgrimage here below; scanty, alas! also in the jewels of our eternal crown.

A plentiful sowing on the other hand will produce its proportionate harvest. For everything done for CHRIST we shall have *our own* reward; and in the degree that we work for Him so shall that reward be. "One star differeth from another star in glory." The holy recluse, the devoted sister of mercy, the missionary who stakes his life among the heathen, the zealous district visitor who risks his health amid typhus and cholera for JESUS' sake, the rich man who sells all that he has and distributes to the poor shall have one reward. The ordinary Christian shall have another. Everything shall be measured out by the inflexible justice of God—that justice which is never so like mercy, as when it awards the meed of holy exertion to the elect, and crowns with grace and benediction the works wrought in them by the HOLY SPIRIT. But not only will the reward of degree be found here below in the unutterable communications of spiritual life, and in the other privileges of sanctity, illu-

mination, continual sense of God's presence, holy suffering, realization of the Lord's passion, and the truest entertainment of the Divine Spouse; but especially will this be carried out in the future state. "One star differeth from another star in glory: so is the resurrection of the dead." There privilege and reward go hand in hand. Free grace and the meed of holy action are combined, for then mercy and truth shall have kissed each other. Whatever has been done here in CHRIST, be it great or be it small, shall receive its own reward.

Its own reward! The reward shall also be in kind. The peculiar work done here below shall obtain its peculiar reward. Besides the general compensation of all the faithful, there will be the crown of righteousness for the Apostle, and the special prerogative for those who have not defiled themselves. There will be the throne set for the patriarch, the immediate place of honour by the LAMB for the martyr; the seat on the right hand for her who was declared to be blessed beyond her divine maternity, for that she heard the word of God and kept it.

And not only will this be the case with regard to these more exalted hierarchies of the heavenly kingdom. The same law of retribution will run through the apportionment of *every seat in heaven*. Every thing in the way

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And not only this be the case with respect to these ecclesiastical hierarchies of the law of retribution, but also in the proportionment of the reward in the way

of faithful obedience done here below will determine and establish its own peculiar glory and bliss in the world to come. There will be the special place for the charitable, for the pure-minded, for the devout, for the peacemaker, for the persecuted. There will be the place of hiding from the provoking of men, for those who have fought the good fight of faith in the midst of a gainsaying and perverse generation. There will be the open acknowledgment in the sight of men and angels for those who have borne their cross here below in secrecy and sorrow, unknown to man, known only to the just Retributor. There will be the proclamation on the housetop of the temple of God, of the secret good deeds of those who have not let their left hand know what their right hand had done. There will be the gathering in of the LORD's jewels, when many shall come from the east and from the west, and shall sit down with Abram, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of the FATHER. The good tree will then be known by its fruit, which, ripened and gradually matured by the alternate rains and serene skies of the world below, shall then hang bright and glistening for ever, in the full beams of the Sun of Righteousness, on the walls of "the garden enclosed," in the streets of the heavenly Jerusalem.

SERMON VI.

THE CUSTODY OF THE HEART.

PROV. IV. 23.

**"KEEP THY HEART WITH ALL DILIGENCE: FOR OUT OF IT
ARE THE ISSUES OF LIFE."**

THE expression, "heart," in Holy Scripture, has a more extended significance than our usual employment of the term. We use the word "heart" metaphorically for the seat of the affections, and therefore for the affections themselves. "My heart is broken" describes the deepest sorrow. A kind heart implies a warm and affectionate regard for our fellow-men. But in the Scriptural use of the term there is something beyond this. It implies the whole spiritual and aspiring part in man. God, Who is not content with a divided offering, sums up His demand upon us in the verse, "My son, give Me thy heart." And when the heart of man is declared to be deceitful

and desperately wicked, the proposition implies a broad assertion of the corruption of the whole nature of fallen man.

The text, then, places before us the duty of keeping the heart, that is, controlling the whole spiritual condition of our nature. We are to keep the heart, and that with all diligence—not negligently, not remittingly, but earnestly and constantly—and wherefore? because out of it are the issues of life, and therefore of death. What a result! life and death! Life—the life of grace here, the life of glory hereafter; death—the death of trespasses and sins here, the death of the undying worm and the unquenchable flame in the world to come. Surely, my brethren, in this there is subject for our earnest meditation. Let us fix our thoughts upon it, praying the HOLY SPIRIT to give us grace to profit by such earnest contemplation.

Now observe, in the first place, the degree of responsibility implied in the command to keep the heart. We are not mere machines—we are not the slaves of destiny—we are not the subjects of a blind fate—we are free, immortal, intelligent beings, fallen indeed from our first estate, crippled in body and soul, yet raised again in CHRIST—set in heavenly places with Him: His brethren, the subjects of His grace and meritorious redemption. We are, I say,

free—free to choose good or ill—and therefore responsible for the choice—free to choose good or ill, because helped by grace to the one, and prone by the suggestions of the world, the flesh, and the devil, to the other—free to choose good or ill, with an eternity of bliss or misery depending upon that choice—"the issues of life," as the text describes them. Our injunction then is to "keep the heart," to keep it by the grace of JESUS CHRIST, without which we can do nothing—to keep it by the aid of the indwelling SPIRIT Who helpeth our infirmities. And what is to keep? it is to guard, it is to watch, it is to subdue; it is to bring every thought, word, and deed under the dominion of JESUS CHRIST; it is to take up His burden, to bear His yoke; it is to empty ourselves of ourselves; to give ourselves up unreservedly to Him, not seeking our own will but His will; not "exercising ourselves in things that are too high" for us, but, like "weaned children," learning our little lesson of self-denial at the foot of the Cross. In short, it is attempting, and by God's grace achieving, the work of self-conquest.

Observe that this keeping must be habitual. It will not do when the temptation comes, at that moment only to keep the heart. For the last act of sin is often beyond our power,

and unless we have been previously vigilant, the Tempter will surely conquer. No doubt, in the hour of danger, when the enemy comes in like a flood, we are to have recourse to the Passion of CHRIST and to invoke the good Spirit, but we shall have failed in our duty if we have not before this so chastened our spirits and trimmed our lamps and girded up our loins, as to be ready to fight manfully.

And this is one of the miseries of old transgression that it mars the keeping of the heart. Sin is not only polluting, it is also eminently enfeebling. You all know how apt you are to fall back into a sin which you have committed before. You recognize the almost uncontrollable effect which certain persons with whom you have in any way sinned, have upon you even in spite of your better resolves. You acknowledge how dangerous it is to be placed anew in the same circumstances through which you have previously fallen. Observe then, how your old sins interfere with the great duty I am pressing upon you—that of self-control. They tend specially to soften the soul—to emasculate its energy—to destroy those habits of carefulness which I have said just now are so important in resisting temptation. Indeed the more old the sin there is, the more the devil finds to work on within us. Were there no

corresponding weak point within us, he would find nothing to try us. It is the inward reciprocation with the outward temptation which forms *his* vantage ground. The remains of sin even in the regenerate implies this in all the sons of Adam; but how infinitely is the danger increased when, in addition to the concupiscence of our nature, the devil finds the weak points of many actual sins. Thus you see how every additional indulged sin is not only dangerous, on account of the pollution caused by it and the punishment due to it, but because it lays open so many more feeble points in the soul to the temptations of the enemy. Each sin by so much diminishes our chance of repentance, inasmuch as a fresh lesion and hurt has been inflicted on the soul, and thus we find that men grow gradually worse and worse, and outlive the day of grace, and wander on the face of the earth reprobate yet not condemned, lost yet not yet judged, the sure prey of the undying worm, though yet they be numbered among the living.

What a fearful condition to be in! In this state was Pharaoh, whose heart God hardened. Do not suppose that God was unjust to Pharaoh. Doubtless Pharaoh worked hard for this hardening. Doubtless his reprobation was the meed of a long course of pride and tyranny,

of the persecution of God's elect, of the neglect of His warnings. Doubtless it was only when miracles had ceased to affect him, and the solemn threatenings of the divine Moses, again and again repeated, had fallen to the ground, that he was given over to this reprobate spirit. And Pharaoh is the type now of many an old man in Christian lands, who having long neglected to hear the voice of God speaking to his conscience, is at last reluctantly abandoned by God, before he has finished his appointed time, and thus he awaits his end. And all because while young and while the day of acceptance lasted, he kept not his heart with diligence.

As I said before, this expression "heart" must mean the whole spiritual nature, for over that our care must extend. It is true that we must chiefly regard the will and the affections, as these sway and control the rest of the inner man. By the will we mean that power of the soul which determines and chooses; by the affection, that attribute which loves and adheres. The one is the strength of the character, the other is its sweetness and beauty. And these are specially concerned in the service of God, for if man fulfils his end, God is the choice of his will and the object of his affection.

God is the choice of man's will. He is infi-

nite perfection, infinite goodness, infinite power, and the will of man was originally formed to cling to these. The will of man must be conformed to the will of God; for the will of God, which is the effective cause of all things, partakes of the nature of His attributes, for God is what He has. The will of man must submit to God's will, for God's wisdom and goodness are necessities of His being. An easy proposition to affirm in the abstract; but oh how difficult to consent to in the hour of trial! how difficult in the hour of sorrow, or bereavement, or doubt, or disgrace, or bodily pain, or poverty, or mental depression, or spiritual desolation, to adore the Omnipotent will of the Supreme, and in adoring to bend to It.

And so with the affections, at once our snares and our glory. What is that power of the soul which may lower us to the level of the cattle, or raise us to the society of the Saints? What is that wondrous constitution of our nature, which, traceable in the lowest organism of vegetable life, rises with the successive orders of beings, till purified and etherealized it burns in the Seraphim? What is that constraining power, which, corrupted and embruted as it is in fallen man, finds its archetype in the Holy Spirit of God, the eternal personal love of the FATHER and the SON? It is the affection. My

brethren, what a power for good and for evil is there in that little word !

By the original constitution of man's nature, which God pronounced to be very good, God was the object of his affection. The body and soul of man, which were formed upon a type of exquisite beauty, in due time to be manifested in the gracious SON of the Virgin Mary, were endowed with the capacity of loving, and God was to be the object of that love. But man soon diverted his affection from the Supreme, and in the perishing objects of sense, in the world, and in himself, he found inferior objects whereon he has frittered away the best and noblest powers of his soul, and committed a spiritual sacrilege, by robbing the ALMIGHTY of His due. You see, then, dear brethren, the importance of keeping the heart, in the sense of the affection, with all diligence, or, as the original text says, "above all keeping." You may squander your hearts in vanity, or you may fulfil the end of your being in loving the Supreme. But you cannot combine these ends. You may do both imperfectly, but, be sure, one or other object is quietly gaining ground. The love of the world or of the flesh or of self may be increasing to the prejudice of the ALMIGHTY ; or, in the midst of much imperfection and many falls and serious backslidings and disheartening

relapses, the love of God may be slowly re-asserting its sway within you.

And in like manner, all the other powers of the soul must "be kept with all diligence," for influences deteriorating or elevating are being hourly exercised upon them. The memory may be filled with vile images and unholy recollections, or it may be stored with pious thoughts, holy words, and the sweet remembrance of past mercies. The imagination may be crowded with foul pictures, worldly fancies, and daring speculations, or it may be consecrated by visions of the beauty of God, of the splendours of the saints and of the new Jerusalem. The intellect may revel in the deceitful charms of scepticism and inquiry, or it may bow down in adoration before the tremendous supernatural truths of the Christian Church. The judgment may take its portion in this life and wed itself to earthly success, and satisfy itself with the husks of swine, or it may choose the better part of Mary, which shall not be taken away, to sit at JESUS' feet and listen to His words.

Thus you see how the whole heart, in the most extended sense of that word, may be perverted or directed—may be debased or elevated—and hence the urgent necessity of keeping it with diligence.

With diligence! We little think, may be, of

the value of that special talent committed to us, our time. While we have a conscience about the use of our money, while we own to ourselves that our mental gifts should be offered to God, we are too spendthrift of that which belongs to all of us—our time. Our time was given us to be spent in the service of God—we may not relax in His work. Believe me, man has enough to do in the time that is given to him. No one gets seventy years allotted to him, without seventy years' work also. Each one has his own special end for which he was made: each one has allotted to him, not by destiny, but by God, what he has to do; and time and power and grace are given him wherewith to do it. He *may* do it; he can do it; he is not *forced* to do it; he may neglect it; but if he do neglect it he has failed in the purpose for which he was brought into being. If he fill up his time with trifles, he cannot have that time for the great work he has in hand—and a great work it is—the conquest of the body of sin, the fostering of heavenly graces, the patient bearing of the Cross, the gradual formation of CHRIST in you, the hope of glory. “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest.”

With diligence! We fancy the Christian conversation so easy a matter, that we may remit and reassume it when we please. What a mistaken view this is! Will any one who has any experience of these things not confess how hard and difficult is the way of God's commandments? For their narrowness and difficulty are they justly called "paths." Have we not the assurance of the SAVIOUR Himself of the strait gate and the narrow way? And shall we, in the face of this, declare that the keeping of the heart is so easy a thing: that we may do it, as it were, at leisure hours, in the intervals of our business or our amusements. Oh, my brethren, do not deceive yourselves on this wise.

With diligence! but in entire subordination to the grace of God. You cannot make one step towards heaven unless you lean upon the staff of the Divine assistance—not a thorn can be removed from before your feet, but by the hand of the Good Shepherd. Work on, then, in entire dependence upon Him. His alone merits have purchased for you the power of walking at all. His grace is your support, His Spirit your consolation, His mighty Sacraments your strength. Go on: pause not, remit not: keep thy heart above all keeping (for such are the words of the Hebrew) for out of it are the issues of life.

The issues of life! The end proves each thing. That is not prosperity which fails in the long run—that is not misery which ends in joy. Life! What is that mysterious thing? What is that which, descending from the throne of God Himself, and partaken of by Him, vivifies all creation? What is that strange condition of being, so different from brute matter, that men have in their ignorance supposed it to be the Deity? It is being in action. Commencing in the simplest organic structure, it rises by a law that shall not be broken through the various orders of creation—ever expanding, ever increasing—acquiring new qualities as it rises—ever exhibiting some new and wondrous property. First beheld in the vegetable world, it rises to the wretched limpet which clings to the wave-worn rock; then more and more developed in the different fishes, birds, and beasts, it rises into man. And yet it rests not there. A new condition is displayed in him: life has become, spirit capable of reason, capable of infinite improvement, capable of infinite elevation; a new nature infused by God, a new condition of existence subject to grace and free will, responsible, the heir of bliss, it may be, the inheritor of damnation.

For life is eternal. Man once called into being can never cease to be. Annihilation is

not among the counsels of Omnipotence. Once existent, man is for ever—in life eternal, or in the second death, for the second death is still an awful form of living. What an oppressive sickening thought! Yes, life is eternal. It is either a life begun here in holy obedience, a life of prayer and faith, and mortification and the love of CHRIST, issuing in the new life of heaven, the life of the flowing river and of the crystal sea; of the tree with its twelve fruits, and the city with its twelve portals; of the saints under the altar crying “how long?” of the four creatures with eyes within and without; of the innumerable hosts of blessed angels; of the countless multitude whom no man can number; of the holy martyrs and blessed saints; of Peter and John, and the Magdalene, and the Baptist, and Mary, and JESUS, the Mediator of the New Covenant, and God the Judge of all.

Or on the other hand, it is a life—begun in self-will and fostered by indulgence; quickened by sensual thought, and matured by yielding to temptation; strengthened by the unhallowed use of the intellect, and ripened by lust and pride, and avarice, and envy, and forgetfulness of God; a life sometimes of great success on earth. Yet too often miserable even here—issuing in the life in death—the life of the undying worm—the life of the unquenchable fire

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The issues of life! The end proves each thing. That is not prosperity which fails in the long run—that is not misery which ends in joy. Life! What is that mysterious thing? What is that which, descending from the throne of God Himself, and partaken of by Him, vivifies all creation? What is that strange condition of being, so different from brute matter, that men have in their ignorance supposed it to be the Deity? It is being in action. Commencing in the simplest organic structure, it rises by a law that shall not be broken through the various orders of creation—ever expanding, ever increasing—acquiring new qualities as it rises—ever exhibiting some new and wondrous property. First beheld in the vegetable world, it rises to the wretched limpet which clings to the wave-worn rock; then more and more developed in the different fishes, birds, and beasts, it rises into man. And yet it rests not there. A new condition is displayed in him: life has become, spirit capable of reason, capable of infinite improvement, capable of infinite elevation; a new nature infused by God, a new condition of existence subject to grace and free will, responsible, the heir of bliss, it may be, the inheritor of damnation.

For life is eternal. Man once called into being can never cease to be. Annihilation is

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—the life of the remorse of the past, of the anguish of the present, of the despair of the future —the life in which existence is hateful, and in which that annihilation from which nature shrinks now were hailed as an inestimable boon.

O Good and Gracious JESU, our life, our only hope, keep Thou our hearts above all keeping, for we cannot keep them without Thee; justify sinners, strengthen the just, deliver us from the pains of hell, and make us all to be partakers of Thine own life, which Thou sharest with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST in Thy eternal and everlasting kingdom.

SERMON VII.

ON TRUTH.

EPHESIANS IV. 25.

“WHEREFORE PUTTING AWAY LYING, SPEAK EVERY MAN TRUTH WITH HIS NEIGHBOUR: FOR WE ARE MEMBERS ONE OF ANOTHER.”

WHILE GOD’S ambassador in the discharge of his office of teaching, is bound to declare the whole counsel of his Master, and thus should never fail to keep before the eyes of his people, the blessed thought of JESUS CHRIST and Him crucified, as the symbol of the whole cycle of Christian truth; on the other hand, it is right and meet that he should from time to time take up some *one* subject, and press *that* home upon his hearers’ attention. Some great act in the Redemption of the world; some moral or theological virtue; or again some sin or disorder prevalent among his flock, may well form the subject of the pastor’s earnest exhortation. In

this spirit I propose this morning to direct your minds to *falsehood* or *lies*, and may the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the FATHER and the SON, suggest to us some thoughts which may improve and amend us.

One of the highest of God's attributes is His justice; and inasmuch as God is what He has, justice is but another name for God. We cannot think of Him otherwise, than as by excellence The Righteous. Once admit the idea of a rational and responsible creation, and you get the idea of a judge who shall decree according to that fixed law in the observance of which He has placed the happiness of that creation. Nay, more, in that blessed manifestation of Himself which God has given us in His only SON, this is still more brought out to us. Not only is the Second Person in the adorable Trinity revealed to us as the SON and the Word of God, but He is also exhibited as the archetypal Verity. "I am the truth," saith our LORD of Himself, and when He was made flesh He dwelt among men, "full of grace and truth." That inherent attribute which had been in God from the beginning, which had been exercised in the beneficent act of creation (for "all His works are faithful,") was in the last days shown forth to mortal eyes in the lowly guise of the

Carpenter of Nazareth, as their God in truth and in righteousness. (Zech. viii. 8.)

Now if truth be thus—not only a part of that righteousness in which God constituted all things—but actually a form and mode of the Divine Being Himself; if it be, not only that, in which God caused all things to be according to their law, but the manifestation of Himself in His Blessed Son; it will follow that anything contrary to this truth will be of the most abominable nature. If truth be the exhibition of the Son of God Himself, we shall not wonder at the whole constitution of the world being founded in it. The condition on which society holds together is perfect truth. Man having the power of communicating with man, and mind responding to mind, it is of necessity that this intercourse shall be carried on upon equal terms. These equal terms are truth and credit. These become the medium of interchange—the moral currency of the world. The nearer we approach to perfect truth in any society, the more perfect is the credit, and the more sure is the basis on which that society stands. Wherever truth is injured, in the degree in which it is so injured, do the elements of social anarchy and dissolution prevail.

In its degree, the same thing holds good with individuals. Truth is the virtue which of all

tends most to nobleness of mind. It may co-exist with silly pride or bad temper, or obstinacy, and a hundred other faults, and yet its presence will give a dignity to the most imperfect nature, whereas its absence sullies the possession of a thousand virtues, and in the degree wherein it is wanting renders despicable a character otherwise admirable. Where truth is a national virtue, the word of God is fulfilled that "righteousness exalteth a nation," whereas the first symptom of decay is when truth is lost. Why do we find that among the southern nations of Europe, wit and genius, and fire, and charm, and intellect, are unable to cope with the more stolid natures of the northerns, but that the former lack the truthfulness which stands for the latter in lieu of all these. Why in society do we exact truth from men, just as we expect purity from women; but that it is the very foundation of the character,—that nothing can supply its place or compensate for its absence—that its presence is the guarantee for the existence of many other valuable qualities, while its deficiency is the concomitant of everything that is base and unworthy.

The opposite of truth is a lie; and in order to get at our duty on this head, it may be well to inquire into its nature and kinds. The common division of lying, is into pernicious

lies, those that are said with an evil intent,—officious lies, those that are said to screen a fault or with other less culpable object,—and lastly, lies of jesting, which may be dismissed in one word of the Apostle—that they are “not convenient,” being at best of a very low style of wit, and always dangerous. But I think that a fuller and more complete distinction of these may not be without advantage.

The first and most heinous of all lies are those that are perpetrated in religion. A falsehood concerning God is the worst form of this sin. To say what is not true concerning Him is a violation of His Majesty and truth, and this it is which constitutes the sin of heresy. A heresy though conscientiously believed subjectively, is objectively a lie of the blackest dye, and therefore every man is bound to be most careful that he thinks correctly about the Deity and about all the points which He has revealed. A wrong belief (O awful thought!) even maintained in ignorance is a sin against the Eternal Truth.

And connected with this—is the heinous iniquity of what are called “pious frauds,” where a religious system is propped up by deceit of any kind, false miracles, false legends, and the like. How men who honestly believe their theory to be the right one can condescend to such things

is a marvel, yet experience shows us that in all sects and religions there is a dangerous tendency to this. There are few religionists who are perfectly candid in their controversies, or who will not avail themselves of an unfair argument when it is convenient. And can they think that the Eternal truth can be subserved by such a course as this? Why will not men believe that God can take care of His own doctrine, and needs not that any should prop it up for Him by unholy means? With what scorn must He look down from heaven upon these puny and unworthy efforts; and with what different eyes will the bitterest partizans look upon that, for which they have not only fought, but lied, when the great white throne shall be manifested, in the valley of Jehoshaphat.

The next most heinous form of deceit is the *lie of malignity*, where a falsehood is told with the deliberate purpose of injuring the happiness of another. Men have a perilous power over others in the way of destroying both their peace of mind and their outward prosperity; if then an unscrupulous person does not hesitate to say things calculated to hurt either the one or the other of these, we see how powerful an influence he may exercise over the fortunes of his fellow creatures. The bonds of society are so intertwined, and the relations so close, that

every man acts upon his neighbour. This takes place even unconsciously, but the power is great if exercised with a serious intention. If then a man, intent upon injuring those around him, not only exercises his power of direct evil, but to fraud adds lying in order to effect the same purpose, the consequences are most perilous. The most innocent life, the most blameless reputation are helpless in such a condition of things, and so much of man's happiness depends upon the estimation in which he is held by his fellows, that it may be effected to any amount by treachery of this kind. Men have been known actually to have died under calumny, and one of the most remarkable spiritual books in the world was written by a holy man, who in the midst of his work, was smitten to the ground by a false accusation, and remained seventeen years under its ban before he was justified.

I regret to say, that there is a great deal of deliberate calumny daily perpetrated in society. Where the ranks are not very definitively separated, there is always an effort to seek to rise socially above those around us, and detraction is an excellent weapon for bringing down those who are our rivals. How much of the conversation of the day consists in depreciating remarks concerning the conduct and persons of

our neighbours, and how often does the true descend to the doubtful, the doubtful to the false? As a man is innocent till he is found guilty, so a depreciating remark is untrue till it is actually proved, and yet what reckless assertion, what vague reports, what slight foundations, what exaggerated descriptions, what uncharitable imputations distinguish the daily talk of the world! We may hope that some of this is done in pure idleness, and not from decided malignity, and yet the malignity grows. There is a subtle and strange pleasure in evil speaking, and in the record of the misfortunes of others; and thus carelessness and folly often degenerate into ill-will and spite—ill-will and spite into falsehood and slander.

Remember you have no right to spread any report till you have taken some means to test its authenticity. If you give currency and fresh importance to a false report, you commit a great sin, and owe a heavy debt to the person you have helped to calumniate. There may be blacker forms of the lie of malignity than calumny, but none of these forms are so prevalent in the nineteenth century. The law prevents our being lied out of property, but who can arrest the evil effects of backbiting? who can restore the friendship it has broken, or reassure the hopes that it has crushed, or give

back the peace of mind which it has destroyed? Yet this sin is daily committed. In our drawing-rooms, in our offices, in our workshops, wherever men or women congregate for social purposes, there is a constant offence to Almighty God by this sin of the tongue. Excellent policeman as it may be in the way of keeping the world decent through the fear of man, it is most hateful in the eyes of God.

The next kind of lying is that lying for lying's sake, which we find sadly prevalent among certain individuals and certain nations. Sometimes the young, before they have been taught the importance of truth, sin in this way. Moreover, the very ignorant are apt to have little sense of propriety in this respect. On all occasions there are men who will just as soon tell a lie as the truth. Sometimes the imagination is highly developed in these persons, and they get into a way of romancing without thinking it very wrong. If the truth comes up they tell that; but if a lie occurs it does just as well. I mention this because parents ought to be very careful to break their children of any such habit. It may begin from small beginnings; but it is very apt to grow; and in forming the character of the young there is indeed nothing so important as to instil into them a sense and love of truth. If they begin

by being lax as to matters in which there is no possible motive for deceiving, we may be very sure that when the temptation comes, as, e. g., to screen a fault or to escape punishment, they will not hesitate to tell a lie. The edge of the conscience has been blunted, and will therefore fail in the hour of trial.

And this brings us to the next head in our definitions. Hitherto the motive for the falsehood has either been bad or wanting.* We now come to the case where the lie is told to obtain some immediate or eventual good. It is a very wide subject, because from the simple lie to serve an immediate purpose up to the difficult question of casuistry, whether a man may tell a lie to save life or reputation, the circumstances and degrees are various to infinitude. Of course we affirm broadly that a man may not tell a lie to obtain for himself *any* good, and that if suffering follows on telling the truth a man must be contented to suffer. The case of Gehazi, the servant of the prophet Elisha, is the usual case quoted on this head. Here, after the prophet had refused to take a blessing of his newly-cured convert, Gehazi went after him, and making an ingenious excuse obtained for himself part of the rich present of the grateful Naaman. But went not the prophet's spirit with him in his fraud and

covetousness? The punishment follows close upon the sin. The sharp denunciation of the prophet is ratified by the word of God, and the sinner goes forth from the prophet's presence a leper as white as snow. So also in the case of the fraud of Rebekah in suggesting and conniving at the theft of Isaac's blessing by her younger son, we have the anger of God hinted at rather than expressed, in the punishment which fell on her. The very circumstances of her sin (as usual) carried along with them the punishment. The act excited the just indignation of Esau: that indignation vented itself in threats, and the wretched mother had to advise the retirement of her favourite son into a foreign country, and never saw him again—never saw him, her partiality for whom had led her on to commit the offence—never saw him, for the very reason that the sin had been perpetrated. Thus it is that God often deals with us. On the lowest ground it is never a wise thing to do wrong for an earthly motive; for, if we are not reprobates and our punishment absolutely relegated to the next world, it is most probable that God will make that very wrong thing the merciful chastisement whereby He would restore us to penitence and to grace.

The whole question turns on this: Is there anything more valuable than the soul? if there

be, you may lie to obtain it; but if God has said that "He will destroy all such as speak leasing," it is clear that we may not commit that sin for anything which the world can give. It is staking our eternal welfare against our temporal good. Moreover, we must bear in mind that the same law applies to all those other forms of falsehood, which are not direct lies—cheating, false balances, sharp practice, and the like. Here, though a falsehood is not told in words, it is implied. If I sell a thing for much more than its value, knowingly, it is as if I had in words misrepresented its real worth—if I by artful twistings am enabled by the law to deprive my neighbour of his property, it is the same as if I had done so by a direct lie. And yet how common is this kind of sin. How difficult is it in any trade to be perfectly honest—to resist all popular adulterations—to oppose all the lax morality which is prevalent on these subjects. In a country where competition exists to the extent it does among us, where every man tries to undersell his neighbour, there is a peculiar danger to honesty. It is in vain that men shelter themselves under the specious pretexts, that they are only doing what others do, that if they affected to be more righteous in these respects than those around them, they never would make their living. God distinctly

says that a false balance is His abomination, and if He uses the same word of hatred which He applies to idolatry, we may be very sure that in His eyes such practices are no light matters. Men must in such cases choose between the favour of God and the favour of man. A happy eternity is a thing worth suffering loss for, and therefore if you cannot make your gains honestly, you must be content to go without them, but do not deceive yourselves by thinking that you may first cheat man and then cheat God, by enjoying your nefarious gains here, without paying the uttermost farthing in the world to come.

The matter becomes more difficult, when the object for which a lie is told is a fine or noble one, like the faithful servant well known in Scottish history, who perjured himself before the judges to save his master's life. Yet even here the same law of distinction comes in, which is the more valuable—this world or the next? S. Augustine maintains that you may not say what is untrue, even if that untruth were to save a friend's life, because your friend's temporal life is less valuable than your own eternal life forfeited by the lie. If persons in pursuit of one who has thrown himself upon your mercy for concealment, demand of you, where he is, you may not deny that you have seen him, but

you may refuse to answer ; you may throw the pursuers off the scent by any ingenious escape, but you may not say what is untrue, even in such an extreme case. These questions are very perplexing, and we may humbly hope that God will deal mercifully with chivalrous sins of this kind ; yet where the sense of truth overcomes the natural kindness, and with bleeding heart the truth is told at all risks, we cannot help being awed by this exhibition of the fear of God. You will recollect that noble fiction in which a person of low estate refuses to save a sister's life at the expense of a lie, and afterwards obtains her pardon under circumstances of unparalleled energy and exertion. The morality here is perfect. It is best to leave the issue of things in the hand of God, and not to do evil that good may come. The end does not sanctify the means, though it may palliate them when wrong, and we should have sufficient faith in God's moral government of the world that He will bring good out of evil, and that the right will triumph in the long run. Many a sore heart may follow upon telling the truth in such cases as these ; but yet, I am sure, that it is best in the end. A sense of rectitude is a support under the heaviest trial, and God will hear the prayers of His righteous servants when they beseech Him to overrule for good their

painful but conscientious acts, and actually bring about, through their truth, what seemed more easily obtained through a lie.

We next proceed to a less heinous sort of lying, that which arises from the desire to please man—the lie of polite society. Here no one is injured, very deep interests are not affected,—the subjects lied about are trifles—the motives are amiable or innocent—and yet *here* is positive sin. A desire to shine in society may not be wrong, but it must not be compassed by such means. The friendship of the world may be agreeable and charming, but it is not worth pursuing at the price of a sin. And yet it is no uncommon practice for persons to invent things by way of making themselves agreeable, saying sharp and lively things which have no foundation in truth.

Or the love of society may take the shape of boastful falsehood. Some men when not likely to be detected, may get into a way of speaking about what they have done, so as to convey an utterly untrue impression of their consequence. This habit so grows upon people as to become simply absurd, yet is it none the less a sin.

A more excusable form is that lying which comes from fear of offending those we live with. This is the special sin of some weak natures, and belongs rather to cowardice of character

than to actual deceit. It often arises from the injudicious severity of parents, and the rough discipline of a public school or from that feeble temperament which never should have been sent there. It is as much a misfortune as a fault, and is to be met by strengthening the moral character generally, and by seeking to bring out in the disposition all those habits of self-respect, which, under the Divine blessing, give dignity to man. On the other hand, where the fear of man takes the shape of lying flattery, we are on the verge of some very great offence. We may say to people what we honestly believe to be true of them, however pleasing it may be to them; but we may not pretend that they have qualities which they possess not. Praise may be a great engine for developing the character of a neighbour. Lying flattery on the other hand is pernicious alike to both parties; to the person flattered it gives an untrue estimation of himself, leading him into a thousand false positions, it degrades him who is guilty of it to the lowest stage of the degradation of refined society.

The last and most venial form of falsehood consists in those slight inaccuracies which slip out in the haste and thoughtlessness of conversation. These can hardly be called lies, because they are not uttered with the deliberate

intention of deceiving, and are intellectual rather than moral faults. Some have very incorrect memories, others have quick minds which lead them to speak before they think, or even without thinking at all. Some persons find it impossible to repeat a thing exactly as they heard it, and without conscious deceit convey a different impression in their narration. Many of strong imagination unconsciously colour facts which in other respects they rightly describe. In short, there is a large region on the confines between truth and falsehood which requires some vigilance on our parts. People should be cautious about this inaccuracy, because like all bad habits it is apt to increase; and no better remedy can be devised than careful self-examination on this particular head, and if you catch yourself tripping in the midst of conversation, it is best to correct yourself, even at the expense of some self-love. Yet he, before whom you correct yourself, will not in the end think the worse of you.

And now that we have defined these different sorts of lying, let us think of their gravity and their cure. The record of the sacred Scripture is very strong against this sin. In the last and awful book of the Bible we are told that *all* liars, without limitation, "shall have their portion in the lake of brimstone which is the

“second death;” and elsewhere it is said that that gloomy abode shall be peopled by “whatsoever loveth or maketh a lie.” And in anticipation of this we find very awful judgments exhibited in the sacred record as the vengeance of this sin. I have already spoken of Gehazi under the old dispensation; there is the still more appalling judgment of Ananias and Sapphira, under the new. These sudden and unprepared deaths, which were the direct and manifest judgment of God upon this sin, have been mercifully written for our behalf, who, living under a law which has remitted the reward and punishment of most sin to the eternal world, have more to fear than those who lived under a temporal dispensation, if we fall into the hands of the living God. May we then have grace given us to apprehend the beauty of truth, in its noblest and most holy aspects, to acknowledge the unutterable baseness and danger of lying its contrary. “Take from me the way of lying and cause Thou me to make much of Thy law,” is the prayer of the man after God’s own heart, and it should be the prayer of every one of us. A heathen fear of the world and a sense of proud self-respect keep many a man from the grosser exhibitions of this despicable sin, but nothing, save the grace of God, can give that truth in the inward parts, which He expects of

Christians. Nothing but the presence of the Blessed Truth, which is CHRIST Himself, in the heart, can give that pellucid and crystal soul which will bear the light at every angle. He who speaks the truth from worldly motives is only careful about that which the world censures, and in cases where the conventional morality of society allows of false vows and protestations, has no feeling about these; but the true Christian, while he is not over scrupulous about trifles, has a conscience which ever announces the approach of fraud, for he is stayed on God, Who is the immutable Truth, Who cannot be deceived.

May we, my brethren, look closely into our hearts, and if on examination we find that we have not been so careful as we ought to have been in this respect, let us bewail the past, and be more careful in the future. Let us really bring home to ourselves the awful detestation with which God regards this offence and recal in order to sorrow anew for them, any sins of the sort, of which we are conscious. Above all, let us be very jealous of lies in the matter of religion, and see that we believe rightly what God has revealed of Himself. Let us be very careful that we injure not our brother in his person or property by calumny and misrepresentation. Let us cultivate real truthloving

hearts, and never allow any advantage, however seemingly plausible, to come between us and our duty on this head. Let us set a watch before our mouths in the common intercourse of society that we offend not with our tongues, and let us even be careful against little inaccuracies of speech, lest we fall by little and little; above all things, let us cast ourselves at the feet of the Incarnate Truth, and implore Him to send forth His light and His truth to guide us to His holy hill and temple, where we shall no longer see things as in a glass, darkly, but face to face, to which blessed consummation may He bring us for His own sake.

SERMON VIII.

THE CRY OF THE PROPHET.

ISAIAH XL. 6—8.

“THE VOICE SAID, CRY. AND HE SAID, WHAT SHALL I CRY? ALL FLESH IS GRASS, AND ALL THE GOODLINESS THEREOF IS AS THE FLOWER OF THE FIELD: THE GRASS WITHERETH, THE FLOWER FADETH; BECAUSE THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD BLOWETH UPON IT: SURELY THE PEOPLE IS GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERETH, THE FLOWER FADETH; BUT THE WORD OF OUR GOD SHALL STAND FOR EVER.”

Most appalling is death! Appalling to all save to the careless and ungodly. Strange that they who ought to dread it most, think least of it. Thus does sin blind its victims both to its guilt and to its consequences. Most appalling is death! The more we dwell upon it, the more we bring home to ourselves its awfulness. We may drown the thought of it by business; we may abstract our minds from the idea of it by the excitements of earthly pleasure; we may in

the time of health fail to realize its dreadfulness, and fancy that we may transfer the confidence of vigour and spirits to the sick-bed,—but an hour must come when the agonizing thought of it will force itself upon us, whether we will or no.

To fear death is no mark of unmanly cowardice, though to fear it excessively may be so. To fear death is nothing more than to acknowledge ourselves to be what we are,—responsible beings, answerable to God for the daily and hourly occupation of the talents committed to us, with a very short time given us to do a great deal in, and with everlasting consequences depending upon the employment of a finite period of trial. To fear death is to own ourselves the erring children of an erring parent, subject to that great law of punishment which hath “passed upon all men”—to that unchangeable decree which hath issued from the mouth of God—“It is appointed unto all men once to die, and after that the Judgment.”¹ To fear death is to recognize the hand of a loving but a just God, whose power is illustrated to us in the permission of death,² as His mercy is in the removal of its sting. “For God made not death; neither hath He pleasure in the destruction of the living.”

¹ Heb. ix. 27.

² Wisd. i. 13.

Who then would cling to the perishing delights and vain enjoyments of this world, when to die is to be with CHRIST? Who would desire to remain longer in this earthly pilgrimage, when to depart is to go to that happy region where there is no sorrow, no grief, no lamentation, but a calm and quiet place of bliss, and blessed Spirits, and a harbour of rest,—where the souls of the just converse together in joyful expectation of their future reward,—where, secure of their own felicity, they are waiting for us, still preserved in the unity of CHRIST's Church and in the Communion of Saints,—where they are supported and chastened, and proved to be sons by the “rod” and “staff” of God Himself,—and where He Himself, their future Reward, vouchsafes to them an earnest of His All-satisfying Self? “I am the Resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.”¹

Let us then consider death in some of the practical ways in which it presents itself before us. The soul of man is immortal. Once called into being, it cannot be annihilated. It must live for ever, though it must change its state and condition. At present it is consorted with a

¹ S. John xi. 25, 26.

body, gifted with many adventitious possessions, most important to its happiness. It has the world, or wealth, or beauty, or talent, or honour, or a happy home, or relations, or independence, or duties, or opinions, or the like. Of all these it must be divested, and must stand bare and naked in the presence of its Creator. We can hardly conceive the process whereby it shall be stripped of all that makes the difference between man and man here, and retain only its identity, and the burden of the deeds done in the flesh. Yet so it shall be. At that hour one object alone will engage its attention. All its former cares and designs, its motives, its reasons, its desires, will be as nothing, and one thought alone will occupy the intensity of its being—"How can I meet the Son of Man when He cometh with His holy angels to judge the earth?"

Would that men would think of this while it is called to-day. "The night cometh when no man can work"—when there will be nothing to work with, nothing to work for. It would alter their motives—it would wean them from sin—it would tend to fix their thoughts on the unseen things which are eternal, and withdraw their eyes from the luring objects of sense which seduce them now. It would lead them to hate and abhor the cloying and deleterious sweetness

of the world, and teach them to "taste and see that the LORD is gracious"—to shun the broad smooth way of the world, and follow Him through the wilderness, who is the Way—to listen to the low but impressive voice of His warning in the events of the world, in calamity, in sorrow, in loneliness.

How different would be the face of the world did men really believe in this—I say, believe, for they who live as the world lives do *not* believe it. They fancy they believe it, they say they believe it; but no action, no purpose, nor line of conduct evinces the reality of their faith.

And another awful thought is, that, though the great day of wrath be not yet revealed, the judgment of God is, as far as regards the departed, actually determined at the moment of death. Suddenly all our deeds are gathered in—a reckoning is made—and all is sealed up against the day of days. The solemn closing of a dead man's possessions, and the affixing a signet to them, till the day when the will is read, is a type of what takes place at the hour of death with regard to the deeds done in the flesh. They are marked and secured. Nothing can be added to them or taken from them. They determine the future condition of the departed; but nothing is known till the awful day when the seals are broken and the books are opened. Yes,

at the moment of every death an undying soul is sealed up for judgment. How little do we think of this when we read of the death of strangers in the chronicles of the day. Yet it is so ! What a contrast is there between the moment before and after dissolution—between the soul overpowered by the agony of the death-struggle, and the same soul, having shaken off the body, shivering on the cold shores of eternity ! But a moment before, that soul was still on trial, and a change in its future condition possible. A gracious God might have extended the grace of repentance to a hitherto impenitent sinner—as some good heathens have been held to have been converted at the moment of death. Or, on the other hand, the awful attacks of Satan, most severe at that dreadful hour, and the personal conflict with the powers of darkness so common then, might have proved too much for the faith of the departing spirit, and so have caused it for the “pains of death” to fall from God. But when the spirit is fled, the trial is over. God only knows what the exact condition of the departed soul is ; but this *we* know, that the hour of trial is then passed—for ever.

At that hour, how infinitely valuable will seem what you prize so little now ! How infinitely worthless then will be what you value so much to-day ! Riches, and honour, and re-

spectability, and excitement will then find their true worth, but so will the time you have wasted, the occasions of good you have neglected, and the graces of God which you have squandered and cast behind you. O, how awful, in the calm stillness of the intermediate state, will be the burden of remembered transgression? What a retrospect will then take place, as in the silence of the grave the whole scene of your past lives passes before your eyes; when old days slowly but most vividly replace themselves before you, and many a sin long forgotten rises up in its hideous nakedness; when the long-drugged conscience awakens, hungry and active, cries aloud and spares not; when the guilty deed comes to be looked at in the bright light that shines from the Cross of CHRIST, which sheds Its Rays only to reveal its hideousness; when early lusts and inordinate affection, the sins of youth unknown to man, forgotten by yourselves, sins of habit and sins of relapse, sins against God, sins against your neighbours, sins of which the consequences may be entailed on your innocent offspring, or have been the ruin of other souls, sins which have perished in the using, and only remain in the stain, the guilt, the punishment—in ghastly and hideous guise come trooping before you. O JESU have mercy upon you at that hour!

And to all, in their degree, must that be a moment of terror and amazement, for "who can say how oft he offendeth?" God's saints themselves have feared that hour, and were saints, "in that they feared." Yet their fear is of a different kind from ours. The holiest of men fears it, for he is human; yet the grave is not to him the entrance into the valley of misery and desolation, where God is to "vex him with all His storms," "rebuking him in His wrath," and "chastening him in His hot displeasure;" but rather the first suburb, gloomy perhaps and repulsive, of the New Jerusalem. Here he had a distant view of her fair spires and towers; sometimes through a glass darkly, sometimes in the dim obscurity of the natural vision, clearer or obscurer as God revealed it; and, as at even-tide it is said that as the sun sets a further prospect is obtained by men at sea, so, at the close of a well-spent life, brighter intimations of the future are sometimes granted to the dying servant of his Master, and some scattered rays of the eternal glory shine through the yet uplifted veil which hangs between this earth and Paradise. And yet to him that hour is one of amazement and consternation; for the very light which God has shed upon His law has revealed his many shortcomings; and the active guard he has ever kept over his daily and

hourly actions, has recalled to him a thousand thoughts, and words, and deeds of sin, most distressing though repented of, and the very realization of the high standard of Gospel purity which he has been enabled to attain to, has only shown to him the infinity of its highness, and to stand stripped of earth, and earthly tabernacle, to be bare, and naked, and shivering on the threshold of the judgment-hall of God, is what is beyond the endurance of human nature, unbearable but for the presence and support of Him.

And that presence and that support are not withheld: good angels are near: no torments touch the souls of the just.¹ As the soul quits the body it returns to Him Whose Creature it is, from Whom it proceeded, to Whom it must go. He Who is the life of the Christian here on earth, Whose hourly and momentary guard has saved him in every danger, Who has assisted him by His grace, raised him in his fall, nourished him by His sacraments, strengthened him in affliction, sobered him in joy, will never leave him nor forsake him. "But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them." In whatever condition he may be, there the life-giving presence of God is with him, comforting, and solac-

¹ Wisdom iii. 1.

ing, and enlightening him in his darkness. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me!"¹

My brethren, it were well that you could steadily and habitually keep before your eyes this fearful moment of death. It would form the most effectual remedy against temptation, whether arising from an unhallowed love of pleasure, or of the good things of this world, or of sloth. Who would cling to the carnal desires of the flesh with the thought vividly impressed upon their mind, that death must come to mar and corrupt those seductive forms which now wean them from the love of their God? Who would lose their souls to Mammon by trying to amass wealth, or heap together comforts, or aggrandise their families, did they think of that mighty power which levels all distinction, and convinces us most powerfully of the vanity and fleetingness of the things of this world? Who would abandon themselves to sloth or soul-destroying ease, who be lukewarm in the things that concern their everlasting peace, did they think that at any hour they may be roused from their fatal security by the gripe of the cold fingers of death, and be awakened to find that the hour of probation and labour has passed

¹ Psalm xxiii. 4.

—while they slept? The thought of this would tend much to destroy the low views which, alas, are now so prevalent as regards the strictness of Christian obedience. Who, “dying daily” in spirit and contemplation, could bring himself to look upon the Christian course, and the severity of God’s commands, of which he that offendeth in one point is guilty of all,¹ in the unreal thoughtless way men do?—who, bearing this in his mind, could fail to be alarmed at the many awful denunciations which He who loves us with more than a mother’s love, for our sake ever rings in our ears, “Many are called but few are chosen.” “Strait is the gate and narrow is the way?”²—who, daily and hourly praying the LORD to make him know his end, and “the measure of his days what it is,”³ would neglect to redeem the time, to do whatsoever the “hand findeth to do with the might,”⁴ to labour, and pray, and fight, and resist, knowing that “the night cometh when no man can work.”

That this is a sovereign remedy against sin, the masters of the spiritual life inform us. In foreign lands we know that many of the religious keep by them the emblems of mortality, sleep in their coffins, and dig their own graves,

¹ S. James ii. 10.

² S. Matt. xx. 16; vi. 4.

³ Psalm xc. 7.

⁴ Eccles. ix. 10.

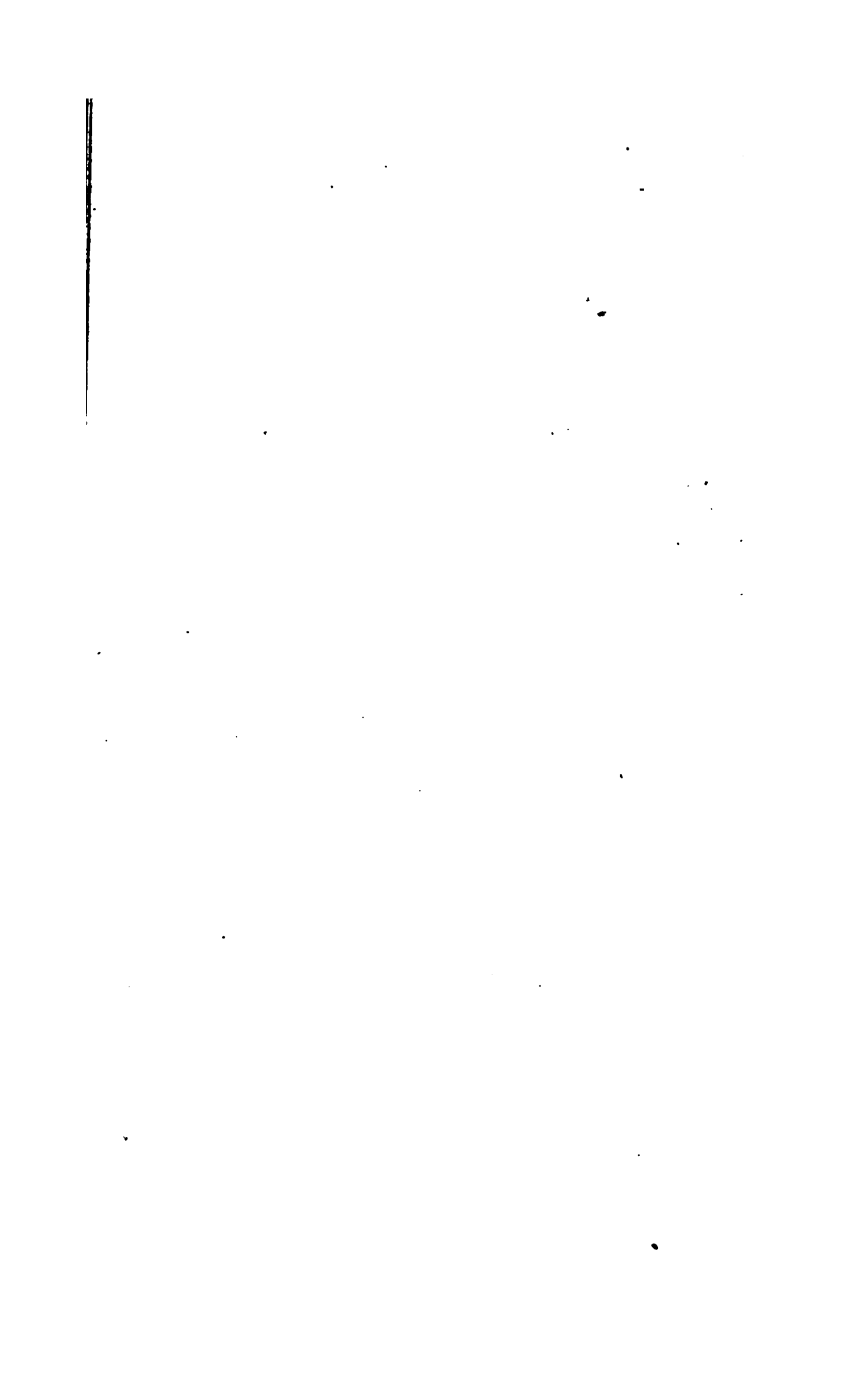
to retain this salutary truth ever in their minds ; and I myself knew of one devout member of our own branch of CHRIST'S Holy Catholic Church, who, living in the world apparently as others did, yet all the time leading a hidden life in her LORD, did every day for fourteen years read to herself, as part of her daily devotions, our beautiful and pathetic burial service. And great and lasting conversions have been wrought by the aspect of the wan features of the dead, and the very passing of the mourners in the streets has a tendency to recall the thoughtless and the gay from their vanities, to the recollection that to fear God and keep His commandments is the whole duty of man.¹

Strive then, my brethren, after this constant remembrance of your latter end. "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil." Do not neglect God's warnings when He calls you by the removal of those about you. Who knows how soon you yourselves may act as the knell to others? God is ever calling you, if ye will but recognise His voice—specially does He call you by His summons of others. Hourly knocks He at the secret chambers of your hearts to tell you—another have I called away, prepare thou for judg-

¹ Eccles. xii. 13.

ment! Every means takes He to make His warnings impressive. Some He hurries out of our sight so suddenly that we hardly realise our loss save by the void which the absence of the beloved one creates to us—others He leaves lingering long on their sick beds, visits them with feverish days and weary nights, slowly lays His hand upon them, counting the weakening pulse throb by throb. Some He gathers in early, to show that fewness of years and physical strength cannot shut out His judgments. Others He leaves to waste away of pure old age, and of impaired faculties of body and soul, to teach us what man's life at best and longest is. All these things are to warn us. O, may we have the heart to take the lesson home to ourselves in all its practical dreadfulness:—"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."¹ "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the sinner and the ungodly appear?"² "Many are called, but few are chosen."³ "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth; because the Spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever."

¹ Heb. x. 31.² 1 S. Pet. iv. 18.³ S. Matt. xx. 16.



SERMON IX.

THE DANGER OF RELAPSE.

2 S. PET. II. 20.

“FOR IF AFTER THEY HAVE ESCAPED THE POLLUTIONS OF THE WORLD, THROUGH THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, THEY ARE AGAIN ENTANGLED THEREIN AND OVERCOME, THE LATTER END IS WORSE WITH THEM THAN THE BEGINNING.”

THE infant faith of CHRIST had to encounter three mighty foes. In its task of subduing the earth three giants resisted to the end.

First of all there was the Judaism on the foundation of which the new system was based, or rather the complement or fulness of which the new system was. The evidence of the contest in this warfare is plainly written on the surface of Scripture. One great class of the Pauline Epistles is devoted to casting out and trampling upon the old Pharisaic spirit which

opposed itself to the new faith openly, and which also lurked among the early converts. The glowing apostrophes in the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians are samples of that mighty eloquence whereby the inspired Jew of Tarsus confounded, once and for ever, the vain traditions and unscriptural doctrines which held so many of his countrymen bound in the fetters of prejudice and formalism. Much misapplied as they have been to a totally different phase of mind within the Christian Church, they speak to all ages of the power and triumph of the faith of CHRIST, and of the destruction of that old and unsatisfactory state of legal righteousness in which the human heart has a tendency to rest and be satisfied.

The next enemy was the ancient Paganism. Here the conquest was more decisive, though the combat was the sharper. The old religion had the arm of flesh on its side, and ten sharp persecutions were its spasmodic efforts at continuance. It had, moreover, the closest alliance with and adaptivity for all the evil passions of the corrupt heart of man. At best it was a beautiful system of Nature-worship. Every propensity in man's disposition, every occult power of nature was deified. The rich forests, the flowing streams, the rolling sea, had each its indwelling goddess, and Nature herself,

with her mysterious processes, and her wondrous manifestations of power, was adored instead of the Creator, Who is above all God blessed for ever. How such a system could ever have fallen seems at first sight a wonder. Perhaps it perished from its own abominations. It was pursued to its legitimate consequences, and men ceased to be able to revere a religion which was synonymous with impurity, or to bow down before divinities stained with the crimes of the basest of their votaries.

The third enemy of the early Church is not so easily recognised upon the surface of Holy Scripture as the other two, but it is there notwithstanding. Studying the sacred volume by the light of ecclesiastical history, we come to find that the true religion had a more deadly struggle with a third enemy, more subtle, more dangerous, than either of those which I have mentioned. The Acts of the Holy Apostles relate a strange passage as occurring at Samaria between S. Peter and Simon Magus, but they do not mention that Simon was the first heretic—was the most active propagator of that deadly Gnosticism which for so many centuries preyed upon the vitals of the Church, and even now in these last days, from time to time shows itself in some new and strange manifestation. Oriental in its origin, it was founded in a belief

of the doctrine of the antagonism between mind and matter, the one of which it held to be good, the other intrinsically evil. It exhibited itself in strange impersonations of the attributes of God, one of which it condescended to allow our Lord to be. It was closely connected with that Eastern philosophy of emanation by which all things are supposed to flow out from the Deity again to be reabsorbed into Him; and, as a consequence, its morality was a strange mixture of rigour and laxity, of asceticism and dissolution of morals, the original vicious principle of the malignity of matter acting in two contrariant ways, either in pampering the body as an indifferent thing, or crucifying it as an unworthy one, according to the temperament of the devotee.

Such a system as this was essentially hostile to God's truth, and accordingly we find that S. John, in his Gospel and Epistles, S. Peter and S. Jude in the works attributed to them, devote themselves to the condemnation of the system. S. John applies himself to confute the doctrinal errors, and to show that CHRIST the Word is no mere æon, or personal attribute of the Deity, but very God of very God, as the Creed says. The other Apostles direct their teaching against the moral effects of the same system, the vanity and conceit, the shallowness

and pretence, the laxity and profanity of the adherents of this vain philosophy.

Moreover, not only was the fight against these three foes carried on in fair and open field, but the times called for other solitudes with regard to them. It was not that they injured the Church by assault from without and by resistance to its holy aggression; they more subtilly worked as a leaven within the Church itself. The Epistle to the Galatians proves this as regards Judaism; the Epistles to the Corinthians with their strange discussions on the permissibility of eating the things offered to idols illustrate the relations between the heathenism without and the nascent faith, and such a text as that which I have taken and many more show the constant tendency to relapse into false belief with regard to Gnosticism and the errors of Simon. Just as in these days we find the doctrine of the Church chilled into indifference by the colder beliefs of the sects around us, just as from social position and everyday intercourse men now become familiarized with habits of thought subversive of the distinctive principles of the faith once delivered to the saints—so was it then. In the unparalleled activity of the human mind on these abstruse subjects in the primitive times of Christianity there seems to have been a constant

danger of relapsing into the errors that surrounded the small community of the Church; and this must account for the strong language of warning and denunciation which we find pervades the Epistles. Not only do we find the errors described and their propagators stigmatized, but the severest expressions are employed to show the danger of relapse. The communion of the Church is depicted as a privilege not to be trifled with; knowledge once apprehended gives an eternal obligation; the truth once received confers an indelible character. "For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them."

Now, though this is the primary meaning of the passage before us, yet we must not suppose that the Word of God is incapable of further extension. God's commandment is very broad, and speaks to us as plainly as it did to the early Christians. We have then to inquire, How does this text apply to us? What are we to gather from it? How is it to influence our

fears and hopes? May the good and life-giving Spirit of God aid us in these our meditations!

I. First of all, this text strikes at the root of the error, that grace is indefectible; that a man once in the favour of God can never fall away from it. This is a very common belief in this country, and no wonder, for it is well suited to the self-righteousness and slothfulness of fallen human nature. Once persuade yourself that you are elected, (no very difficult task by aid of your self-love,) and it is a very pleasant religion to believe that henceforward you have nothing to fear. The Apostle, however, teaches the very contrary; for those very persons, of the possibility and danger of whose fall he is speaking, are described in the preceding verse as those who "were clean escaped from them that live in error;" and the corresponding passages in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which treat of the same subjects, predicate of those who can fall many excellent gifts: "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the HOLY GHOST, and have tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them unto repentance."¹ And again: "If we sin wilfully after that we have received

¹ Heb. vi. 4.

the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.”¹

An awful truth, then, is it, my brethren, that they who have at one time been truly faithful, may *totally* and *finally* fall away!

But without taking into consideration such a fact as final reprobation succeeding upon the despite of the graces we have received, we have to consider the general proposition of our Apostle, that the case of relapse is so much more deplorable than any other spiritual condition; that in the case of those that are entangled and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. Why should this be so?

1. Because the fall is by so much more criminal by how much it has been committed voluntarily and with the eyes open. A man can never henceforth plead ignorance, if, after having known God and His law, and repented of its infractions, he wilfully repeat the offence. Such an act is nothing short of revolt, and insult to the good God, and deserves a more rigorous punishment, according to the Word, “The servant that knew his Master’s will, and did it not, shall be punished with many stripes.”

¹ Heb. x. 26.

2. And next, such an act implies not only rebellion and insolence, but also heinous ingratitude. It is no small outrage to God, after having renounced the devil who is His enemy, and submitted oneself to Him by such renunciation, to rise against Him, to renounce His allegiance, and thus in some sort to give a triumph to the evil one. It may be a strong way of putting it, but it is nevertheless true, that the deliberately relapsing Christian prefers the devil before God, because, having been at times the servant of both, and having weighed their merits in his own estimation, he chooses the demon instead of his Maker! What a foolish choice to prefer the accursed spirit whose one delight is the ruin of souls, and whose feet are swift to shed blood in the ways of destruction, before the tender and loving Creator of all things, the beneficent, gracious, and holy Being, at Whose right hand is happiness, and in Whose Presence are pleasures for evermore!

3. Relapse is dangerous, on account of the exceeding difficulty of recovery. As in the physical frame in illness a relapse is ever more to be dreaded than the original ailment, and makes the patient worse than he was before; so in the world of faith, the state of the Christian who, after Baptism and Repentance, falls again into

the disorders he has forsworn, is so grievous, that the coarsest similes, such as the vomit of the dog, and the wallowing of the swine, are used by the Apostle to picture his condition. As the unreasoning brute, recovered for a time by education and circumstances from the filthy habits of his bestial nature, on occasion found, returns to them by the strong power of instinct ; so the relapsing Christian, after a time, comes to fall, as it were, by some constraining necessity, and in spite of the remonstrance of conscience, the warnings of God's holy Word, and the conviction of the ultimate consequence of his error, repeats his sin, till nought remains but the "certain fearful looking for of judgment."

We all must acknowledge this to be the case in habits of drunkenness. Those who have had to deal with the cure of this abominable sin will tell you, that what they have had to struggle against chiefly is that enfeebling of the will, whereby resistance to temptation is lost, and the sinner relapses on every occasion. The unhappy victim is fully aware of the evil effects of the vile habit that has mastered him ; he knows the ruin that it is working in him in mind, body and estate ; he looks back with regret upon the innocent past, and compares the broken fortunes and the shattered nerves and debetated intellect of the present, with the bright

hopes, and firm step, and youthful spirits of his early days ; he is well aware of the awful future that awaits him—paralysis, delirium, premature death—and then the second death ; yet he will not, he cannot refrain.

Now what is most evidently shown forth to us in habits of dissipation, is also true of every sin. We may not see it so clearly, but such is really the case. In every kind of wickedness relapse is most dangerous, not only in destroying the power of resistance, but in many other ways : for perhaps the most fearful of all the results of sin is the withdrawal of the grace of God. Bear with me, my brethren, while I speak of this to you very earnestly. The grace of God is the life of the soul ; it is the means of its continuance in His favour. Its presence there makes the difference between that soul being the abode of the Holy One and the habitation of devils. To be in the state of grace is to fulfil the end of our creation, and to answer all those blessed objects for which the Son of God was made Man. It is to anticipate even here below the blessed conditions of our future home in heaven ; it is, as it were, the foretaste of those joys of communion with God which shall be indefectibly ours in heaven.

It is the fruit of the Passion of CHRIST. It was merited for us by the labours of JESUS.

Every sorrow which He endured, every prayer He offered, every action which He performed, from the first moment of His conception to His last sigh upon the bitter tree, purchased for us an infinite treasury of grace. Now relapse into sin, the falling again into the crimes we have repented of, more than anything else, tends to the withdrawal of grace. However generous God may be of His benedictions (and never, never till the great day of account shall we know all that He has done for us), He cannot bear that they should be misused. Early in the day He said that His Spirit should not always strive with man, and the same law still obtains: "From him that hath not, shall be taken away that which he hath."

Nor are we to maintain that this law refers merely to great and heinous crimes, such as intemperance, and impurity, and the like; the same runs through every infraction of God's law. Whenever a man relapses into any wilful sin of which he has repented, he incurs in a degree the condemnation of the text. Whatever his fault may be, ill-temper, touchiness, ambition, avarice, over-solicitude for the things of this life, excessive love of finery, hankering after admiration, personal vanity, addiction to company, evil-speaking and backbiting, foolish jesting which is not convenient, dissipation of mind, or any other besetting fault, if a man having fully re-

cognized its enormity, after having solemnly repented of it, falls back again into the same error, the consequences are most deplorable. The conscience has fairly done its work, and being despised, in time refuses to act; the moral sense is blunted; the casuistry of indulgence begins to pervert the whole nature; God begins to withdraw His assistance, and the stereotyping of an evil habit begins to take effect!

. A grievous condition to be in! . As the man sunk in temporal misfortunes looks back on the days of his departed prosperity and esteems no kind of misery so great as the recollection of his former happiness, so one can conceive no picture so desolate as the retrospect of a man, plunged in some consuetudinary sin which is slowly and surely destroying him, to the scenes of his long lost innocence. He knows them well, he recognizes their beauty, he bewails their loss as he turns from them with a sigh, but he cannot have the heart to conquer the evil one; he has by his own act become the slave of the devil, and the recollection of his past days of peace only adds fuel to his regrets, and responsibility to his acts, and shuts the mouth of his wickedness by the exhibition of God's mercy frustrated, God's designs unfulfilled.

But while I press these serious thoughts upon you, I would not have myself misunderstood. What I have said of deliberate relapse into sin,

does not apply to those little backslidings, which are the consequence of the weakness of our nature. Every one must have found in their examination and confession before Communion, how often the same sins come up again, and how we have to bewail from time to time the repetition of the same shortcomings. Now with regard to this, we must not expect too much of ourselves. It is Catholic truth that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright, and the Scripture bears record that the just man falleth seven times a day. It is one thing deliberately to relapse into a repented sin, it is another to be overtaken by a sudden temptation, and to be betrayed into frailty. Still one must take care to distinguish between these two, lest on the one hand we distress tender and scrupulous souls, and on the other hand give countenance to laxity and to indifference in religion.

The grand distinguishing idea between these two states, is the earnest will to keep straight and the fervid desire after holiness. If each fall is mourned over, immediately confessed, checked and disciplined, we need not be afraid. If the recurrence of the fault does not cease to alarm the conscience, and to call forth all the powers of the soul for its immediate correction or abatement, we have reason not to despair. Above all, if the lapse throw us more depend-

ently upon the succours of Divine grace; if it make us feel more vividly our entire reliance on the supernatural aid of God; if it make us more fervent in invoking the Blessed Spirit of God; if it send us more frequently to the sacraments and other means of grace; if it bring us more constantly to the feet of our Blessed SAVIOUR in all practices of devotion, we have reason for much consolation. Why should we be disheartened? Is not the Christian course a course of constant falls and risings again? Does God expect of us all at once the work to do which He gives an entire lifetime. Does He not know whereof we are made, and has He not compassion upon our infirmities? Has He not shared our nature, and are not His sympathies with that frail and erring creature to whom He has so closely allied Himself?

To sum up, then, and to apply what has been said, I would in conclusion say, that while earnest and tender souls, anxious to do their Master's will, and really hating sin, are not to distress themselves unduly on account of those frailties to which the very condition of our nature makes us liable; while such are to be satisfied with the *gradual* extirpation and amendment of evil habits, and must not expect that they are to become ready-made saints at once, the text places strongly before us the very great peril of deliberately allowing oneself in any sin that

has once been repented of. If ever we have recognised and mourned over a fault we can no longer plead ignorance with regard to that fault, and however we may try to sop our conscience with regard to its heinousness, we cannot plead that we sinned through the instrumentality of ignorance. In short, we are to fear to add sin to sin, because every such falling away by so much injures our chance of final acceptance, as it inflicts lesion on our conscience, and aggravates the wrath of the long-suffering God. But this is not all the lesson of the text. The Apostle here points out a certain class of sins, which are of such an awful nature that for them there is no forgiveness, inasmuch as they crucify the LORD afresh, and put Him to an open shame; and these are sins which the decent world now gives little heed to, such as unfaithfulness to God's truth, speculative error, apostasy from the Church of CHRIST.

May God give us grace never to fall into these frightful errors! may He grant us to hold the faith in a good conscience, and *never, never*, for the life of us, to sacrifice this world for the next, our duty for our pleasure, or the solid and peaceful service of the good JESUS, for aught in heaven or in earth.

SERMON X.

THE SHOWING OF THE FATHER.

S. JOHN XIV. 8.

“LORD, SHOW US THE FATHER, AND IT SUFFICETH US.”

THESE are the words of the Apostle S. Philip, on the occasion when our Blessed SAVIOUR, after instituting the Holy Sacrament, proceeded to speak to His disciples of some of the fruits of their being incorporate in Him. It was the night of His immolation, the old rites had passed away: the substance had succeeded to the shadow: the highest act of religion had been inaugurated: the Divine Victim had offered Himself, and before setting forth to endure the first scene of His Passion in Gethsemane, He, the Friend and the Teacher, true to the last, fulfilled His mission of merciful instruction in the solemn chapters from which my text is taken.

CHRIST was now abiding within them ; they were therefore peculiarly fitted to receive the words of CHRIST the abiding Teacher. The Word of God dwelt in their hearts, and those hearts were now specially prepared to receive Its accents, speaking to them from without.

Yet the Apostles had not yet received the gift of the HOLY GHOST ; they were still imperfect and unlettered ; their faith was feeble, and that very night was to witness their shameful abandonment of their Divine Master. They were still uninspired. Power had not been given them from above. The LORD had not yet breathed on them, or conveyed to them that mission, in which they were to teach and preach in His Name. Beyond the illumination which every Christian has by right of his unction from the Holy One, they had at this time no special gift for the enunciation of divine doctrine. It is therefore with some surprise that we find this simple disciple, stumbling upon the great truth of life. Possibly not knowing what he said, or perhaps speaking from the imperfect light which his Jewish education had bestowed upon him, he asks the question of questions—he prays the prayer of prayers, “ LORD, show us the FATHER, and it sufficeth us.”

To be shown the FATHER, is the end of the Creature. This is the unspeakable bliss which

God hath laid up for them that fear and love Him. God is the final object of man. The whole order of nature and grace has been appointed that God might be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe. God is the means whereby creation exists. Were He to take His Presence from the things that are, they would sink back into nothingness. He is not only the Being, the I AM, in the sense of perpetual self-sufficient existence. He is also the Being, in the sense of the cause of all other Beings. All other things are but the faint shadows of that abyss of existence which is laid up within Him. Yea; He is the cause of all things. "For His pleasure they are and were created."

He communicates in all His creatures without diminishing His own fulness, but they have nought in themselves save that which they have of Him. His duration began before time, His extension traverses all space; yet time and space are but His creatures, ordained by Him for the purposes He wills them to fulfil in the scheme of His providences. The universe is but His minister. He was complete without it. He would not be diminished by its annihilation, yet all things are for Him, and in Him and by Him do they consist.

And if this be so, whensoever we come to treat

of the rational creature, we must see that the end of that rational creature must be the adoration and service of his Maker, and that before he can so adore and serve Him, that Maker must in some sense be manifested unto him. Hence to man and to angel to be shown the FATHER "sufficeth." Once convincingly exhibit to the rational soul, what God is in Himself, and what He is to His creature, and it 'sufficeth'—'sufficeth' for grace, for heavenly aid, for spiritual strength, for glory, for beatitude, and for final end.

It is thus that the angels are maintained in grace. It is thus that fallen angels and fallen men are responsible. God's nature is the test of right and wrong. "Once shown" He determines the morality of action. None can say they know not what was right, when the FATHER hath in any degree been manifested to them. In the proportion that He is shown, in His beauty, His mercy, and His justice, the moral responsibility is implicated. Whether He speak from the depth of the conscience, or from the affairs of the world which He orders, from His revealed word, or from His personal dealings with the individual soul, in the degree that He is so "shown"—merit and demerit, good and bad, right and wrong, come to receive their measure.

But if the manifestation of the FATHER be thus the end of the rational creation, how much more shall that manifestation "suffice us" who are His dear children by adoption, the joint heirs of His Blessed Son.

My brethren, we shall never know in this imperfect stage of our being all that God is to us. The tenderest images drawn from life below, the affection of the parent, the love of the chaste spouse, the fidelity of the true friend, the passion of the lover, nay, the very strong instincts of the lower creation, are used as faint similes of that strong, individual discriminating regard which our God has for each of us. And yet more: all our powers having been made for Him, they each find their highest energy in the contemplation of Him only. He is LORD of the memory. He is the strengthener of the will. He is the King of the affections. Made in His image, man best fulfils his mission on earth, in submitting himself wholly and entirely to his Maker and Fashioner. Formed in His likeness, man's highest spiritual developement consists in conformity to His will.

And truly in many ways is the FATHER shown to the Christian soul; and each manifestation in its different degree (by a marvel of love) "sufficeth." First in nature. To the pious soul, the sight of the external creation speaks

of the FATHER. Where shall we find such silent monitors of the tenderness and goodness of God as in that bright and blessed springtide which is now by God's goodness again revisiting us? These vernal glories will not fulfil their end; this youth of the year will fail in its intention, if it do not speak to us in gentle accents of the goodness of Him on whom the eyes of all wait, that He may give them their meat in due season. Why should the undulations of earth, caused by the action of primeval fire, or the gentler slopes resulting from some mighty flood of water in the early times, shape themselves into forms of sublimity and loveliness, if they did not shadow forth in their poor way the perfections of Him who made them? Why should we derive pleasure from the magic transformations of light and colour, which flit across the landscape, if they did not say, Lift up your hearts—lift up your hearts above this beauteous outward scene and adore the Maker of all. Or raise your eyes to the starry firmament by night and contemplate those wondrous orbs, each perhaps the centre of a system greater than our own. Try not to scan the depths, nor count the glories, but sink down in adoration before His throne, Who hath made "Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south," and who, appreciating their beauty with the heart

of a maker, has manifested Himself among other attributes, as "the bright and morning star."

Yes, dear brethren, to the true Christian all nature showeth the FATHER—and "it sufficeth." It speaks peace to the weary soul harassed with the cares and vexations of this passing world—it affords topics of comfort to the heart vexed with contending with the sad predominance of evil in the rational creation—it breathes the blessing of health into the very physical frame, and fits the whole man for fresh duties, and higher enterprizes of faith.

But if God be thus manifest in nature, He is also manifest in humanity, even in them that neglect and forget Him. To the worldly man the study of history is but the sequence of ideas telling upon opinions and these again forming institutions. Such a student traces, in the way of cause and effect, the material laws of progress, civilization, and decay. He assigns reasons for this success and that failure, and in his degree he assigns them rightly. But if he stop there, he will fail in his philosophy. No truly great mind (even looking at the question apart from faith,) can fail to recognize in the course of nations the operation of laws which are not material. A law of merit and demerit runs through nations as it does through individuals—and interpositions in the sequences of cause

and effect, similar to what in the case of individuals are called special providences, occur in the history of peoples. Observe but the moral treatment of these ; early frugality is rewarded with the dominion of the earth ; luxury and effeminacy are punished by excision or conquest. Effete races are regenerated by the mixture of healthy barbarians, and invasion or revolution saves the country, just as some diseases are the painful effort of nature to throw off the morbid affection. The true key-note of history is the Providence of God. His will can best solve its difficulties. Many things, as in individual, so in national life, remain as mysteries. We cannot scan the abyss of His Providence, but enough is given us to prove that as doubtless there is a reward for the righteous, so doubtless there is a God that judgeth the earth ; and the whole course of the world, the rise and fall of nations, the progress and development of ideas, the formation and consolidation of institutions, the conditions of civilization and barbarism, all "show us the FATHER," if we will but look for Him, and exclaim in accents not to be mistaken, "Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings ; be instructed, ye that judge the earth." Thus this also "sufficeth."

But more especially is the FATHER showed to us in the kingdom of grace. Here we come closer

and closer to His mercy seat. Here we are admitted into the inner circle of His Providence and tender care.

No one can look into his own heart, without finding there a testimony to the operation of supernatural causes within him. I do not say that men may not take a morbid view of their own interior, or that they may not be deceived by false lights, which proclaim peace where there is no peace, but, in general, every one must be conscious of God's dealing with him. Only look back upon a few years; see how you now recognize that things which you once eagerly longed for, have been withholden from you in mercy and love; how that which you prayed for impatiently has been granted to you, but to your sorrow; how external circumstances, apparently most disturbing to your soul, have told directly upon your spiritual welfare; how prejudices have increased or have disappeared, as the manifestation of the Church's truth has sunk deeper and deeper into your heart; how those who live with you have been made, in ways most unexpected, to minister to your good, or to search out your spirits.

Now all this intimate work going on within you "showeth the FATHER." We have no record of this in the experience of the best of the heathen. They hardly had a word for con-

science, and the accounts of the struggles and aspirations of the spirit of man illuminated by the HOLY GHOST, to them were as idle tales. The sighs of the saints, the efforts of the strugglers, the deep peace and calm of the advancing Christian, the sense of vigour and fresh life which accompanies the earnest and repeated resolution to forsake sin once and for ever, even the gush of remorseful sorrow, and the scruple of the tender and sensitive heart, all bear witness to the fact of the operation of God upon the soul through grace, and manifest, in a new and most winning light, that tender care which is so special a proof of His Presence within us, and which more than the most ingeniously constructed evidences, and the most logical ratiocinations, prove to us that "the LORD alloweth the righteous, but the ungodly and him that delighteth in wickedness, doth His soul abhor." This also "sufficeth."

But all these manifestations of the FATHER, blessed and real though they be, come far short of the mighty truth in its fulness. Hear the words of the Gospel: "Philip saith unto Him, LORD, show us the FATHER, and it sufficeth us. JESUS saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? he that hath seen Me hath seen the FATHER: and how sayest thou then, show us

the FATHER." Here we come upon holy ground, for we have to contemplate the very nature of GOD Himself; let us approach the matter reverently, following the paths of Holy Church and invoking a blessing upon our feeble accents in speaking of these high and mighty themes.

And first of all, while in fixing our thoughts upon the inscrutable mode of existence of GOD, we recognize a Trinity of Persons, each person by Himself from all eternity, GOD and LORD, yet we never venture to think of these persons as infringing upon that ineffable Oneness which is the essential and necessary property of the Supreme. In the sense therefore that each of the three Persons is absolutely GOD, and that GOD is necessarily one, we come to see how our LORD said, "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the FATHER;" but we must understand something even more definite than this, for while we believe the distinct hypostatic existence of the Holy Three, so that the SON is not a mere energy of the FATHER, but a real co-eternal Person, we must also believe that there is such a circumincession of the Divine Persons within each other, that the whole FATHER is in the SON and in the HOLY GHOST, that the whole SON is in the FATHER and in the HOLY GHOST, and that the Spirit Himself is entirely in and with the FATHER and the SON. This is

termed in theological language the Co-inherence of the Persons of the Trinity, and it comes to occupy a most important place in the Gospel scheme.

For first of all, it needs the balance of this truth, to preserve the faith against the imputation of Tritheism. Unless we hold this as a living verity, we are apt to get into a way of thinking of the FATHER as one God, and the SON as another God, or at any rate of allowing our minds to rest at times upon the one to the exclusion of the other. I need not say, how entirely unchristian this is.

And next from this truth alone, we come to obtain a due conception of the real divinity of CHRIST, and to appreciate the place which He occupies in the realms of faith, as the manifestation of the Deity. Even before He took our nature upon Him, it was the Second Person in the Holy Trinity, who, as the Word of God, or as "the angel of good counsel" dealt with mankind, especially the Jews, and represented the Deity in the conduct of the affairs of earth; but how much more is this now brought home to us—how much more is this loving care commended to us—what an additional importance is the great truth of the co-inherence of the Divine Persons invested with—now that God has indeed taken upon Himself the nature of

man, never to abandon it again, and has become, by right of a common nature, our Brother, our Benefactor, and our Friend.

So now, dear brethren, in the Person of **JESUS CHRIST**, both God and Man, we see the most important office of the manifestation of the **FATHER**. "Canst thou by searching find out God?" the inscrutable Creator is so mysterious that He cannot be grasped by the intellect of the creature, till, by condescending to the very condition of His frail handiwork, He actually is manifested to his feeble comprehension.

This is what the Apostle indicates when he says, that "in **CHRIST** dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." **CHRIST** is therefore set forth to us, not only as our Propitiation, our Mediator, our King and High Priest, but as our Worship. He is the object to which all our thoughts in prayer do rise. He is that on which the intellect rests in scanning the height of the Divine perfection: His is that sacred Form, which amid the spiritual existences of our heavenly home, forms the rest for the people of God, whereon, leaning and reposing, they can rise to the contemplation of the Triune God. He is in short the manifestation of God to the sons of men, "the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His Person."

Gaze, then, my brethren, upon that holy

form, which the blessed Gospels and the Christian art of nineteen hundred years (blessed be His Name) has made so familiar to all of us. "Behold the Man." But in that image of goodness, and holiness, and purity, do you also "behold your God." That marred Form is the Form of God the Son, and in God the Son dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and thus the eternal God is brought home to our humblest conceptions, and in the spirit of devotion and love we cry with the contrite Apostle, "My God and my Lord."

And doth not this "suffice us?" What more need we to win our hearts to holiness and to heaven? Where among the fleeting pleasures, and the mad ambitions, and the sordid gains, and the perishing beauties of earth, shall we find that which we can desire in comparison with this? What faculty of heart and soul is there, which He is not ready to satisfy? The delights of this world perish in the using, satiety succeeds to excitement, disappointment follows upon ambition, the love of money hardens the heart till it diseases the brain and maddens it with the terrors of imaginary poverty, and beauty fades and passes away: but He, the Unchangeable and the Unchanging, ever remains the same, ever the One Friend, ever Faithful and True.

And will not this showing of the FATHER in the Person of His Blessed SON work out in us an exceeding weight of glory? As imitation is one great law of our being, so that for good and for evil, even from our childhood, we try almost unconsciously to copy those around us, so the manifestation of GOD in CHRIST, as it comes to be apprehended by the soul, will work a blessed work within us. Imitation is one of the ends of our LORD's coming in the Flesh: He was given not only to be a sacrifice for sin, but also an ensample of godly life; and therefore when GOD says, Be ye holy, for I am holy, it is at the mirror of the Blessed SON of GOD that we must deck ourselves in His merits, and adorn ourselves in His righteousness.

Oh then, I beseech you, seek to imitate your LORD. Study, so far as in you lies, to copy the pattern in the Mount. Conform your ways to His, Who went about doing good. Try to pray as He prayed; to bear contradiction as He endured it; to labour for souls and for the good of others as He did. Mix in the world, as He frequented the haunts of men and the rich man's feast, to elevate and improve it. Boldly discountenance sin wheresoever you find it, as He reprov'd the Pharisees. Turn not aside from suffering in the way of duty, as He set His face steadily when about to go to Je-

rusalem. Deny yourself, as He emptied Himself of His glory for the love of man ; and be obedient to the least of God's commandments, as He was obedient, even unto the death of the Cross.

This course, steadily persevered in, shall indeed " suffice," for, through His merits, it will lead to the blessed sight and true love of God. The crowning bliss of heaven is to see God in the face, and thus the whole course of the Christian's life, trial and sorrow, triumph and holy joy, the discipline of life and the imitation of CHRIST, subserve to the great end of showing us the FATHER. The imagination of man fails him, as he seeks to realise this glorious vision. All that nature and art can suggest of beauty are inadequate to supply images to describe this blessed condition. Enough is revealed to us to encourage us in patient well-doing. Enough is displayed to induce us to bear the heat and the burden of the day with courage and humility ; to renounce the pleasures of this life for the assured delights of the next.

" Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest and receivest unto Thee : he shall dwell in Thy house, and shall be satisfied with the pleasures of Thy house, even of Thy holy temple."¹

¹ Ps. lxx. 4.

“How excellent is Thy mercy, O God : and the children of men shall put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings. They shall be satisfied with the plenteousness of Thy house : and Thou shalt give them drink of Thy pleasures as out of the river. For with Thee is the well of life, and in Thy light shall we see light.”¹

“But as for me, I will behold Thy Presence in righteousness : and when I awake up after Thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it.”²

¹ Ps. xxxvi. 7.

² Ps. xvii. 16.



SERMON XI.

JESUS OUR WORSHIP.

EXOD. XXV. 40.

“AND LOOK THAT THOU MAKE THEM AFTER THEIR PATTERN,
WHICH WAS SHOWED THEE IN THE MOUNT.”

THE ornaments and decorations of the tabernacle of the wilderness, were to be after no earthly pattern. Their types were shown to Moses in the Mount of God. They were only the shadows and examples of that which was to come: still they were after a pattern, heavenly and supernatural.

Such is the literal interpretation of the text; but there is also a mystical sense. The pattern showed in the Mount, is our blessed LORD Himself on Calvary. The spouse is enjoined to make her tirings after that model. The suffering of her SAVIOUR is made her bridal apparel; His Manhood her example. She is en-

joined to be CHRIST-like; and to become so, she must contemplate Him on the Mount.

It has pleased God, in some way to us unknown, to bind together holy living and right believing. However different the sources in the soul, whence these spring, they are nevertheless united in their consequences. They act and react upon each other; either tends to produce the other. Thus, an orthodox faith finds its co-relative in a high and exalted standard of practice; while lax views, with regard to what Christians should believe, are in general accompanied by low notions of what they should do. Wickedness shuns the austere presence of truth, while obedience and devotion, for CHRIST's sake, meet a reward in clearer evidence of the external realities of God.

Holy Scripture teaches us that this is so,¹ and "the examples and experience to be gathered from faithful histories" confirm the same. How many of the heresies, which afflicted the early Church, rose in pride, and set in carnal sin! How sad a spectacle of moral depravity do those nations exhibit, who have ceased to belong to the congregation of CHRIST's flock! How low is the public character of those lands where some supernatural sanction is not recognized! We admit the immorality

¹ S. Matt. v. 8; S. John vii. 17; viii. 48.

of misbelief in extreme cases : even the law of the land refuses to admit the evidence of some sinners in this kind : why, then, are we slow to admit the whole rule in all its bearings, that while, on the one hand, a right belief tends to a spirit of self-sacrifice and exalted devotion, and a life of obedience and love acquires more and more regard for dogmatic truth, on the other, vague belief tends to careless practice, and vicious action to false faith. It is wrong, then, to say, that we need not be particular about matters of belief if our conduct be good ; for he does not live well who does not believe aright,¹ and a good life, and true faith, are linked together in a golden bond ; we must hold "the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience."²

Now, the tendencies to misbelief or heresy vary continually. Each age has its own inclination to error, and in resisting that, lies the peculiar trial of the time. The Judaizing spirit of the first days of Christianity—the oriental influences during the decline of the Roman empire—the reaction of an almost effete Paganism, after the state-recognition by Constantine—the nominalist (and conceptualist) errors of

¹ Ep. S. Calixt. cit. Bon.

² 1 Tim. iii. 9. Cf. S. Bern. Sermon. xxiv. in Cant. cit. Bon. de Div. Ps., p. 819.

the Middle Age—the abuse of individual judgment at the revival of letters, were each and all of them tendencies of this kind. And since those days, the peculiar circumstances of the times, the spread of knowledge, and the changes in the social condition of the people, have tended to multiply and precipitate them. At one time, in oscillation from opposite statement; at another, arising from unforeseen causes, error has, from age to age, sprung up or reproduced itself; and, though the victory has been gained, and the truth has stood unshaken, yet “the good fight of faith” has been continuous.

But various as are the forms of error, one canon may be deduced from all of them; that as is their nature, so is their fruit. Not only does misbelief *absolutely* produce mal-practice, but a peculiar misbelief brings forth a practical mischief homogeneous with itself; while in a less degree (for the Christian character is an harmonious unity), a firm hold of any one Christian verity, often results in the development of some corresponding Christian grace. Now, to apply this to the present day, I think it may be said, that as the evil tendency of the last century was a spirit of disbelief in the Divine nature and mission of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, resulting in coldness of heart and irreligion, so the danger which we have to struggle

against in these days, is an infirm grasp of the doctrine of His sacred manhood. Men do not realize the Humanity of our LORD—not that in words they deny it—they would be shocked were such a charge brought against them; still it is to be feared that there is a practical Apollinarianism in the world, which lurks at the root of much of the vague faith and lax practice of the present day.

The spirit of the age, I repeat, does not bring home to itself this important truth. It cannot comprehend the stupendous humiliation of the Incarnation. It cannot induce itself to contemplate Him, Who is very God of very God, and equal to His FATHER as touching the Godhead, in His nature of very Man, as touching which He is inferior. It cannot bring itself to regard His laborious life and piteous death as real injuries to Him endured for us. It is inclined, even where it admits all this, to look upon His assumption of human flesh as a thing past and done, and that now He shines forth untrammelled by the spoil of mortality. These notions, in their ultimate result, throw doubt upon the Gospel narrative, or submit it to a system of unhallowed interpretation. In their tendencies, they are apt to weaken the hold of that narrative on the heart and intellect. The sad and affecting truths therein detailed, are

diluted or explained away—the power of our LORD's Divinity is made to cover and conclude everything, and a sentimental object of worship, calculated to feed the imagination and feelings is, in fact, substituted for the Son of Man.

And how desolating the effect of this is on the soul, need not be placed before you. It engenders enthusiasm instead of true religion, weakening all the higher motives of obedience and love to GOD, and mars, perverts, and cripples all the beautiful peculiarities of the Christian faith. Unless we can grasp in affection, as well as in imagination, the august lowliness of every passage in our LORD's life—unless we can, with the proper dispositions, contemplate the cradle of Bethlehem, or, in the spirit of the Maries, stand by the Cross, how dead and unreal becomes our religion! We can find no lively oracles in the Scriptures—we can experience no true sentiments of joy or compassion in the perusal of the holy Gospels—we can find no spiritual reflection in the ritual of the Church—we cannot be glad at Easter, nor mourn in Passiontide—we can see no spiritual meaning in the Psalms, of all of which CHRIST is the key-note, and the character of our belief must degenerate into a subtle and deceiving heresy.

Indeed, whether we view this doctrine in its dogmatic or moral aspect, we shall observe the

importance of a firm grasp of it. For, not to go into the whole question of the Divine economy,¹ be it remembered, that, to use the language of the schools, the Manhood of CHRIST is the instrument of the Godhead,² i.e., whatever in the mystery of man's redemption has been caused by the HOLY TRINITY, has been effected through GOD the SON, in His nature as Man. Through this, His inferior nature, all grace and truth,—every Divine assistance and supernatural aid,—every gift and heavenly unction, come to sinners. The Flesh in which He suffered is the efficient instrument, as God is the efficient principle, of our safety; and although this be in a way³ ministerial, yet, when we use the term instrument, as applied to the humanity of our LORD, we do not mean an inanimate passive one, capable only of impulse from without, but in itself as joined to the Divinity,⁴ a cause and source of action. "Wonderous is Thy Passion, O LORD JESU," says S. Bernard,⁵ "which hath driven away our sufferings, forgiven all our sins, and healed our every

¹ Cf. a very lucid statement, S. Anselm, *Cur Deus Hæmo*.—*Lib. ii. c. vii. p. 88.*

² S. Thom. *Aq. Summ. Theol. Ia, 2, q. 112, 3a, 49, 1, 2, and 48, a, 6, c.*

³ *Summ. Theol. 3a, 8, 1, 1.*

⁴ *Summ. Theol. 3a, 7, 1, 3. See also 3a, 19, 1, 1.*

⁵ S. Bernard *de Passione.*

plague; for what is so deadly as not to be healed by Thy Death?"

Moreover, it is in His human nature that our blessed LORD is the Head of the Church.¹ All the intimate and endearing associations which that holy bond of union implies, come from thence. It is in this that, in its highest and most mysterious sense, the Communion of Saints obtains. Through it the tabernacle of God is with men, and He dwells with them.² Through it we are united to Him "in a most blessed and mysterious union, beyond what thought can conceive, or words express," for we are members of His Body, of His Flesh, and of His Bones.³ Through it we are in CHRIST, and CHRIST in us—CHRIST living in us, and there being no condemnation for them that are in Him.⁴ Through it we are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, JESUS CHRIST Himself being the chief corner-stone.⁵ Through it, we, being many, are one bread, and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread.⁶ Through it we have eternal life, and shall be raised up at the last day, for His Flesh is meat indeed, and His

¹ Summ. Theol. 3a, q. 6, a. 3, q. 8, a. 1, q. 48, q. 49.

² Rev. xxii. 3.

³ Eph. v. 30.

⁴ S. John xiv. 20; Gal. ii. 20; Rom. viii. 1.

⁵ Eph. ii. 20.

⁶ 1 Cor. x. 17.

Blood is drink indeed.¹ In short, "while CHRIST as GOD unites us in Himself with the FATHER," "as man, He unites us His fellowmen with Himself." Hence the glorious privileges of the Church of CHRIST; hence the mystical washing away of sin in the laver of regeneration; hence the intimate relations between the Creator and the created in the Sacrament of the LORD's Body; hence the remission of sin, the resurrection of the flesh, and everlasting life after death.

Furthermore, the Humanity of our LORD, in a dogmatic view, is most important, as tending to direct the intellect to a proper object of adoration. The mind of man finds difficulty in loving the abstract notion of Deity. When it has attempted this, it has often fallen into idolatry. The doctrine of the assession of CHRIST at the right hand of the FATHER has given a true direction to all worship; for by it we understand that the very Body in which our blessed LORD was born, lived, and suffered,² is now in heaven; no longer clothed upon with squalor and misery, but more glorious than the sun. Still, it is human nature indeed and in truth. Man's intellect is crushed by the purely spiritual essences of the unseen world; if he cannot understand the nature of the lowest

¹ S. John vi. 58. ² S. Thom. Aq. S. T. 3a, q. 58, a. c.

angel or seraph, how can he raise himself to the contemplation of the omniscient, eternal God? But though this be beyond him, he can "apprehend CHRIST;" he can, by the powers of his mind, enlightened by the Spirit of God, enter into the idea of that Human Nature, which God the SON has assumed, never to lay aside; he can lift up his heart to that Form which, received of the substance of the Blessed Virgin Mary, is now gathered into the Godhead, an earnest of what we shall be hereafter, if we be holy and like unto Him here.

And surely, if any motive were requisite to animate a worship so rightly directed by a spirit of true fervour and inward affection, the thought of that Form, which, though fairer than the sons of men, was more marred than any man,—of those wounded Hands and Feet, and that pierced Side, which still remain open, pleading the merits of their own suffering, and hiding the penitent from the wrath of God,—of the gracious and inconceivable Countenance, which no mind has ever adequately pictured to itself in its godlike and ineffable beauty,—ought surely to be the highest and most powerful. Thus, infinitely short as our conceptions of Him must ever be, the glorified Body of our LORD seated at the right hand of the FATHER forms "a rest for the people of GOD," whereon they

may lean in trembling love and adoration, and from which they may turn the eye of faith to the surrounding glory and dazzling brightness of the BEATIFIC VISION of God.

Nor is this less important in a moral view, inasmuch as it tends most immediately to foster the love of God within us, which is the source of all virtue, and also helps to create that likeness to Him in which standeth the perfection of the Christian.

Whether we consider that love of God which arises from a contemplation of His excellence and attributes,¹ or that which proceeds from the reverent thought and recollection of what He has done for us, it is evident that a devout contemplation of our LORD's Incarnation is most effectual in kindling either in the soul. The thought of this has animated the saints of God in all ages of the Church, has strengthened the endurance of martyrs, has sent forth missionaries to convert the earth, has induced men to retire from a seductive world into solitude and silence,—in short, all that is good and

¹ "The love of GOD is twofold. The first, the desire or LOVE OF HOPE, or, as the schoolmen call it, of chaste concupiscence. By this we love GOD as known by faith, as our last end, and for our own happiness in possessing Him. The second is the LOVE OF BENEVOLENCE or charity, by which we love Him for His own sake, or because He is infinitely good in Himself."

great, all that is supernatural and above the world in the conduct of man, all that is peculiarly Christian in human conduct, has arisen from the pious thought and intense realisation of the great truth, that the Divine Person Whom we adore is not only the mighty God and Prince of Peace, but (oh! unspeakable mystery of benevolence) our fellow man.

“O good JESU,” says one who in ancient days presided over the Church of Canterbury,¹ “how amiable art thou in the heart of him who thinketh of Thee and loveth Thee! And yet I know not, for I cannot attain unto it, how Thou art far more amiable in that Thou art flesh, than in that Thou art the Word; or that Thou art more gracious in that Thou art lowly, than in that Thou art exalted. Truly, it is sweeter to dwell upon Thee, born in time of the Virgin Mother, than begotten of the FATHER, ‘in the day of Thy power, in the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning,’ and to contemplate Thee emptied of Thy glory, and in the form of a servant, than in the form of God, equal with God. It is sweeter to behold Thee dying upon the tree in the presence of the Jews, than reigning over the angels in heaven; to see Thee subject rather than dominant; the Redeemer of those that perish, rather than the Creator of the things that existed not.”

¹ S. Anselm. Medit.

And so, too, with regard to the production of the Christian character,—to the formation of the great Gospel mystery, “CHRIST in you, the hope of glory.”¹ Not only does the reverent contemplation of the Incarnate nature of our LORD tend strongly to imprint Him upon the heart and affections, but also it is by the communication of that nature, through the Sacraments, that that likeness unto CHRIST is traced and filled in, and blessings beyond what we can imagine are accorded to body and soul. But without entering upon this, it is evident that when a man meditates on God, and his thoughts are drawn away from worldly things to the lowly contemplation of the LORD JESUS in a bodily likeness, as He was on earth,—when all the heart-subduing circumstances of His sad life and bitter Passion, endured for us, one by one, present themselves before the eyes of the soul,—when these things sink deep into the recesses of the inner man, in a way most occupying, most concerning, moving its subject to a great compassion and pity for our LORD, Who for us men suffered so much shame and sorrow,—it cannot but be that a great moral effect must take place within the soul. Surely the goodness, and love, and patience of our blessed LORD must speak home to the heart, moving it with that strange unwonted mingling

¹ Col. i. 27.

of joy and grief,¹ before now the mysterious meed of undeserved suffering. Surely the work of the HOLY SPIRIT must accompany such awful communings. Who after such thoughts would rush into deliberate, wilful sin? who overvalue the world's praise or the world's sneer? who not find therein comfort in sorrow, strength in trial, companionship in woe?

But you will ask, why do I at this time press these things upon you? why urge on you these solemn considerations? I do it, not only on account of the intrinsic value of this mighty verity, but on account of its intimate connection with all Christian worship. Our LORD's being made man has changed the character of all adoration. The ritual of the new law derives all its authority and all its grace from the Priesthood of CHRIST. That has absorbed and gathered into itself all methods of approaching the ALMIGHTY, and except in Him and through Him is neither Priesthood nor devotion. Now the priesthood of our LORD is the consequence of His Incarnation. He was made a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek, not when He was begotten of the FATHER, before all worlds, but when He was incarnate by the HOLY GHOST of the Virgin Mary. On earth He commenced His sacerdotal work by His own oblation of Himself for the sins of

¹ Platon. Phædon.

an erring world, and, now ascended to the right hand of the FATHER, as man He continues the same—ever grasping the censer as He offers the prayers and praises of the Church—ever pleading His own death—ever showing His sacred wounds—ever pointing to His Holy Cross. Thence, too, He sends down upon His anointed servants on earth the streams of His benediction; He it is who consecrates in their sacraments: He it is who blesses in their blessings. As God, receiving worship; as man, paying it. As God, granting; as man, suing; at once, in an ineffable manner, the Deity, the Priest, and the Victim. Moreover, the assumption of human nature into the Godhead has added, as it were, a new idea to our conception of the Supreme, that of perfect manhood; an idea which must still be accounted for, inasmuch as it is not destroyed, but gathered into the Deity. This has in a degree changed the character of devotion. Before our LORD came in the flesh, the Supreme was spoken of in the character of man, only in accommodation to our finite understandings, as repenting, being angry, and the like: not that He was actually so, for God is without passion; but to convey to us a certain impression, just as the same Holy Scriptures speak of the phenomena of nature in the popular way. Now, such impressions come to

us in a still more intimate sense, for our God has wept by the grave of His friend,—and has been “sad,” and “amazed,” and “very heavy.” Before our LORD came, He was described as King and LORD, to convey to our minds the idea of His paternal government and power; now He is indeed, and in truth, a very King; “Thou sayest that I am a king,” and “The LORD both of the dead and of the living.” The result of this is, that we must worship Him, not only in spirit and truth, but also with all such observance as, were He now on earth, we should pay Him. Like the wise men from the east, we must fall down and worship Him—like the leper, cast ourselves at His feet,—like the Magdalene, humiliate ourselves before Him. And this, I say, is one chief reason for our solemn service. This is the cause of the ritual and ceremonial character of the Liturgy of the Church of CHRIST, which character the HOLY SPIRIT continued, even when the old ceremonial law was abolished. The splendours of the old religion were typical, and conservative from idolatry; ours are the fitting worship of God, as He is revealed to us. The result is the same, though the motive is altered. It is for CHRIST we deck our altars. It is for Him, that under this spiritual dispensation we still strive to raise houses exceeding magnificent. It is for Him that

we employ wealth, and skill, and the best of our powers; it is to Him that we consecrate art; to Him we offer the beautiful. Of His own we give back to Him a little. He it is whom we greet with the sweet strains of psalmody; He it is whom we adore with lowly postures—our chancels, our ornaments, our frontals, our rich chalices, and costly decorations, are all for Him. All these things are no lifeless forms, but replete with gracious significance and spiritual benediction. Dead in themselves as separated from Him,—for Him and in Him are they quickened.

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SERMON XII.

THE CORONATION OF JESUS.

For Ascension Day.

SOLOMON'S SONG III. 11.

“GO FORTH, YE DAUGHTERS OF ZION, AND BEHOLD KING SOLOMON WITH THE CROWN WHEREWITH HIS MOTHER CROWNED HIM, IN THE DAY OF HIS ESPOUSALS, AND IN THE DAY OF THE GLADNESS OF HIS HEART.”

OF the national solemnities which form the ceremonial life of a mighty people, none so strikes the senses as the enthronization of its king. In it the outward pageant derives dignity and significance from the serious interests which are involved therein, and it needs not the interposition of the sanctions of religion to invest it with a more than ordinary importance. Through streets lined with soldiery to preserve order, multitudes are hurrying—all wend their way to some mighty shrine consecrated by the

piety of ancient times ; the eye seeks in vain for rest from the bright colours and archaic forms of the costume of the spectators, while within the solemn fane the sight is even more overpowering. There all that is great and dignified and of ancient birth and of distinguished talent, is assembled to do honour to the occasion. Prelates and peers—the heir of the long-descended race, and the more honourable creator of his own name—the soldier, the statesman, the man of science, the administrator of justice, all are gathered together to witness the susception of sacred vows, the undertaking of serious responsibilities. The nation by representation is present—all eyes are turned upon one person. A centre figure—as perhaps our own experience has taught us—young and interesting, forms the cynosure of the pageant, and amid the solemn chant and the organ's pealing sound, the mighty contract between the sovereign and the people is ratified in the sight of God.

Moreover, if even in a nation like our own, where, under the forms of monarchy, we have the freedom and liberty of a more popular scheme of government—if even with us, where the sovereign is as amenable to law as the meanest and poorest of her subjects—this occasion be so striking, what must it be in those lands, where a simpler and earlier form of go-

vernment obtains ; where coronation confers not merely mighty influence but actual irresponsible domination ; where by the solemn religious act real powers are conferred, a real character impressed ; where the melancholy arbitrement of life and death is personally bestowed, and the destinies and happiness of a whole people handed over to the unfettered will of a single individual, responsible to none but God, and amenable to nought but the sure Nemesis which sooner or later ever follows the broken vow, ever pursues the violated compact.

Yes ! coronation is a solemn thing, and we cease to smile at the simple chronicler of ancient times, as he dwells on the glittering circumstances one by one. The baser sort are ever led by the outward appearance, but the true lover of his kind will never need to apologise for an interest in that of which the splendid outside show is but the symbol and sacrament, when he thinks of the mighty interests bound up in that day's work, and of the serious consequences for the happiness or the misery of the many which follow upon it.

But there is a deeper and more recondite reason for this interest. All that is bright and beautiful here below has its antitype in heaven above. "*Omnia sunt bona, bonitate Dei,*" as theologians say. All that is good and lovely here below is only good and lovely in so far as

it corresponds with that Archetypal Goodness and Loveliness that hath been from everlasting.¹ What we delight in on earth, what pleases the eye and gladdens the heart of the true servant of God, of men informed by the Divine Word, is the pattern of the heavenly things. God is Beauty and Truth, and "of Him we have received." Whatsoever is great and glorious is only so in so far as it shadows forth, faintly at best, the greatness and the glory of God, and "the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made."

Why, my brethren, have I prefaced these words? why have I alluded to a ceremony of this kind, when we are met together in the house of prayer? I have done so because the mystery of to-day speaks to us of a coronation. The word of God speaks to us of a solemnity of which the earthly pageants of this kind are the type and shadow. "I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came unto the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before them. And there was given unto Him dominion and glory and a

¹ Omne bonum est bonum solâ similitudine divinæ bonitatis.

kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him : His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away ; and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

Here we have, by the voice of the HOLY GHOST, the account of the coronation of human nature in the person of the Incarnate Word, and it is to this aspect of the mystery of to-day that I would strive to call your attention.¹

Now, first of all, we must bear in mind that every action of the SON of GOD, being the action of the Divine Word and Wisdom of the FATHER, is of infinite significance. He could do nothing at random. Everything was done to an end. Everything was done with His might. There was a mysterious purpose in every deed of the God-Man.

¹ "Depinxerat Christum Dominum in ferculo suo purpureum illum ascensum occupantem, nunc jubet Angelis et hominibus quibus spectaculum factus est, hominibus tamen potissimum eum aspicere et venerari . . . Nam quando Dei filius pro hominibus homo dignatus fuit effici, huic ecclesie desponsatus fuit, huic etiam Deus qui caput est Christi coronatus fuit humanitate seu floridissimâ carne, sumptâ ex sanguine castissimo Immaculatæ Virginis Mariæ, et caro autem hæc fragilis *corona* seu Diadema vocatus, quoniam in ea hostes immanissimos debellavit ; mortem, Diabolum, peccatum ; et inde captivam ducens captivitatem, acceptâ in cœlo et in terrâ omni potestate, triumphans in empyreum ascendit."—Delrio, Cantic. 122 verso.

And if this was the case with regard to all His actions—if the *theandric* power shone forth in every minute particular as He sat by the wayside, or frequented the rich man's feast, or wandered along the solitary shores of Gennesaret, or spent the night upon the lonely mountain, how much more was this the case in regard to those mightier actions, which occurred in the direct way of the salvation of the world, by which, as in the Litany, we yet invoke His deliverances, and which in their fruit are yet as new and fragrant as in the day when they were graciously performed for us men and for our salvation—the Incarnation, the Nativity, the Baptism, Fasting, and Temptation, the Cross and the Passion, the precious Death, the glorious Resurrection, the admirable Ascension, and the coming of the HOLY GHOST the Comforter. I repeat it. Every action of the Blessed SON of GOD had its deep *moral* and *administrative* significance, but beyond that there lay a virtue in the mysteries of joy and sorrow, in the power of which the curse of sin has been annulled, the power of the evil one cast down, the bonds of sin loosed, the soul of man freed, and a new and living way opened for us to everlasting life.

Thus, as "the day of our LORD's Resurrection is the day wherein the dignity of the everlasting priesthood was actually collated upon Him," so

“the day of His Ascension, or placing at the right hand of God, is the day of His solemn enthronisation, when the LORD ‘sent forth the rod of His strength out of Zion.’”¹ To-day has been enacted within the heaven of heavens that which the pure and holy Daniel saw in vision upon his bed. To-day has the mystic Solomon been crowned, when “he sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king’s mother, and she sat on his right hand.”² To-day has the ring been placed upon the finger of the true Joseph, “arrayed in vestures of fine linen, and the gold chain put about his neck.” To-day have been fulfilled the words of the Prophet, “And in mercy shall the throne be established: and He shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness.”³

But the coronation of our LORD is not the quiet accession of the heir of a desired and long-descended line to the peaceful seat of his fathers: it is rather the final triumph of a mighty warrior who through blood hath waded to the throne. It is rather the eventual vindication of the true heir, who, as in many an oriental land, has been debarred from his succession by the intrigues of his enemies, and has

¹ Dean Jackson’s Works, viii. 383.

² 1 Kings xi. 19.

³ Isa. xvi. 5.

to obtain his own by the might of his holy arm. It was at His Incarnation that our LORD became a king. Hence the words of my text, that it was His Mother that crowned Him. When He stood before Pilate, He looked little like a king, and none in that hour acknowledged His dominion. The true David was anointed in Hebron long before He seated Himself in the palatial city of Jerusalem. It is after His Resurrection that all power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth.¹ He has to send forth the rod of His *strength* out of Zion, and to be ruler in the midst of His *enemies*. It is not till He has "come near, and put His feet upon the necks of them," that "the absolute and total conquest of CHRIST, and the dreadful majesty of His throne,"² has been manifested to an adoring world.

And who are they whom the triumphant LORD hath thus routed? I will not speak of

¹ "Quid est diadema istud, clarissima prophetice veritatis auctoritas, cujus quot sunt præconia, tot gemmarum est Christi diadema; unde dispensationis illius quo de utero Mariæ tanquam sponsus præcessit de thalamo suo, et in die lætitiæ cordis ejus—quo spineâ coronâ coronatus laborem consummavit et subsequenti lætificatus resurrectionis triumpho. Et in die lætitiæ illius, et in die dispensationis illius in illo diademate videndus et ex illo est diademate quantus sit agnoscendus."—Rupertus.

² Pearson.

those temporal enemies who now, or in times past, oppose and resist His will; I will not allude to Jews and Romans, and all the nations who have felt the weight of His avenging arm in their utter subjection. Rather will I speak of the *spiritual* enemies of this Monarch, whom He hath overthrown—Satan, sin, and death: each a mighty potentate—Satan, “the *prince* of this world;” sin, that “*reigned* unto death” “in our mortal bodies;” death, that by one offence *reigned* “from Adam till Moses.”¹

Now the royal work of our ascended LORD is to subdue and to destroy these; and because, though scotched and crippled, they still exist, so the royalty of our LORD is a present and potential act of conquering dominion. Just as in view of the sad, ever-recurring, ever-increasing tide of human guilt, the everlasting priesthood of our LORD is ever exercised in the way of absolution, and thus the mystery of Easter and of the Paschal Lamb is ever fresh and new; so, in regard to the continued, though crippled existence of the powers of evil and the evil spirits, the sovereignty of CHRIST is ever militant in recalling the grace of the Ascension. To the end must the struggle go on, till all things shall be subdued but the SON. The “demonstration of the eternal justice of God,”

¹ Rom. v. 21; vi. 12.

and the probation of holy souls, require that still the powers of evil should be allowed; and therefore is the Eternal Son "set down on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool."

And yet the conquest is complete, so far as our condition of trial will allow. Satan subdued is now the unwilling servant of Divine justice in the case of the reprobate, while he has no power to hurt the elect of God. Sin still remains, in all its hideous mystery, as the measure of the love of the Cross, but has no power over the children of the kingdom; and even death itself, though still allowed to fill its place in the physical world, has now changed its conditions, and altered its position in the kingdom of grace, its realm being the ante-chamber of the New Jerusalem, and itself the harbinger of a joyous resurrection. "I will ransom them from the power of the grave: I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues: O grave, I will be thy destruction."²

¹ Hosea xiii. 14.

² "Non est dubium homini sanæ fidei ac mentis, quin Christus, quâ Deus est, regiam dignitatem eandem penitus habet cum Patre ac Spiritu Sancto, et eam ex omni æternitate cum utroque possideat. Sed de eâ non contendemus hoc loco; verum de illâ, quæ homini assumpto non solâ proprietatum communione competit: quâ ratione attributa

But we must not confine our ideas of the royalty of CHRIST to a mighty warrior going forth conquering and to conquer. The holy word of God especially recognises our LORD in His attribute of King as essentially the Shepherd of His people. That striking relation of the governor to the governed which we find in the earliest inspired records of the past, and which by its very title suggests so many images of simplicity and tenderness in those ancient times, finds many analogies in the Gospel covenant. Our heavenly monarch is to His own no "minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil;" but yielding to the deep necessities of the benevolence of His attributes, "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?"¹

omnia divini Verbi in humanam naturam redundant : sed ita ut insit in naturâ hominis ipsa, et eam afficiat, ac velut formet.

"Cujusmodi non est regia illa dignitas, quâ rex est Deus : uti nec æternitas, nec immensitas humanam Christi naturam afficiunt. Itaque Persona ipsa Christi tam has proprietates, quam regalem dignitatem propriè recipit, secundum divinam substantiam, non secundum humanam : et si illam spectes, regnum habet, exercetque quam optimo et amplissimo jure in res omnes a se conditas, temporale non minus quam spiritale. At sacerdos non est neque Pontifex nisi secundum assumptam hominis formam." Pet. de Inc. xiii. c. xv.

¹ Dan. iv. 38.

First, is His reign established in the kingdom of the physical world. Our LORD hath taken to Himself a created nature, and in doing so hath made Himself LORD of All. At His feet roll ten thousand systems, to which the heavens of which we are cognizant are as a grain of the sand; but you have not to look far beyond this world itself at this beautiful season to see the effects of your Legislator's power. This bursting spring-time, when nature is at its freshest and loveliest, when the hidden powers of vegetable life, so lately dead and inert, have again put forth their might to the glory of God, and the green carpet of the earth, and the rich foliage of the trees and the flowers reflecting every hue of paradise on the earth below, all speak to the eye of faith, as the sweet bird's song speaks to the ear, tells us not merely of a King, but of a King Whose law shall not be broken, and Who shows us, by the beauty of that inviolate law, how bright would be His other kingdoms, did not the free will of man mar what He had made good, and defile what He had pronounced pure.

And yet even here is His dominion. "The LORD is King and hath put on glorious apparel." On all nature from His golden throne our triumphant King looks down upon the deeds that are done on earth, bending them to His omni-

potent will. Before His unerring eyes the vast extent of space is unfolded, and as He is *beyond* space, so is He above *time*, and to His cognitions past and future are alike eternally present. He rules not by deputy—no angel or archangel is the satrap of His dominion. To Himself He arrogates the ordination of all things. All free-will subserves to His controlling will, and His gracious ends are worked out alike by the predestination and by the free choice of the creature. “By Me kings reign,” saith the uncreated Wisdom of God, and all events which occur, while to us they seem to be, and in one sense actually are brought about by the secondary causes of the advance and decrepitude of states, the ambitions and necessities of individuals and peoples, the growth of ideas, the influences of race, climate, and the like, are in fact the permission, or the ordination of the great King of heaven and earth, “whose dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”

And next, His reign is established in the kingdom of grace. S. Augustine, commenting upon the fifth Psalm, asserts that Scripture is wont to give the appellation of King to the Son, and illustrating the fifth verse of the second Psalm, “Yet am I set by Him as king

upon Sion, His holy hill, preaching His decree," observes, "This is clearly spoken in the Person of the Very LORD, our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST. But if Sion signify, as some interpret, 'beholding,' we must not understand it of anything rather than the Church, where daily is the desire raised of beholding the bright glory of GOD." Thus our Blessed SAVIOUR is King and LORD of His Mystical Body. That mighty organization is no mere fortuitous congeries of holy souls, unknown to men, known only to GOD, without discipline or order; but it is a well-grounded polity, of which by far the greater part is in heaven, obeying, loving, serving, adoring, and where here on earth the heart of man finds its truest happiness in perfect and unreserved submission. How it comforts one in the midst of the mysterious providences and spiritual trials, and strange dispensations which mark the course of the fortunes of the Church here below, to dwell upon that unswerving obedience which is paid Him by the glorious hierarchies above. What is the worst that can happen here below in the way of confusion and rebellion compared with that unfaltering, unswerving, intellectual, willing obedience which the higher creation yields Him? and even upon earth, in this valley of tears, however much our individual faith may waver, we cannot

doubt but that mighty and beneficent purposes are daily being worked out for the spouse of CHRIST by the very trials to which she is submitted, and that, however faintly we may recognise the traces of His sceptre, He does indeed reign in Zion, bending the wills of men, and the fortunes of the nations, to the eventual triumph of good, to the restoration of Pentecostal Unity, to the increase of holiness and felicity, to the bringing all the elect to the measure of the stature of His own fulness.

Who can tell, in the Providence of God and in the exercise of His kingship, what may be the result of the circumstances of the present times? They cannot fail to have their effect upon the fortunes of the Church of CHRIST. It is not a question of dynasties and nationalities only. Mightier and deeper interests are bound up within the case. How will Latin Christianity come out of the contest between the potentates who are its most active supporters? Is the Moslem, in virtue of the mutual jealousies of Churchmen, still to occupy new Rome? Is England to remain for ever in the haughty barrenness of insular singularity? We know not. The LORD is king, be the people never so impatient. He sitteth between the Cherubim, be the nations never so unquiet.

And more than this, He is the very King

and LORD of holy souls. When we say, "Thy kingdom come," what mighty thoughts are stirred up within us! May Thy reign be established within our hearts!—Thy kingdom which Thou hast said is "within" us. May every power and faculty be subdued to Thy gracious commandments! Be Thou the Master of our intellects, the LORD of our affections. Be no treasonable thought, no faithless desire, no disloyal intention harboured within us. Rule Thou, not now in the midst of Thine enemies; but in the midst of obedient and adoring powers, amid imaginations cast down, amid feelings disciplined, amid hearts inflamed. Rule Thou, and receive from all Thy people, the tribute of grateful lives, and of time and talents devoted to Thy service. Rule Thou, and so constrain our wills already subject to Thee, that even in this world we may anticipate the perfect conformity of heaven.

Of heaven! There at least He shall reign in the absolute predominance of unquestioned and unchallenged domination. "Thou art the King of Glory, O CHRIST: Thou art the everlasting SON of the FATHER." "He who is King before He has subdued His enemies, how shall He not rather be King after He has got the mastery over them?"¹ Of His kingdom there shall be no

¹ See S. Cyril, xv. 27, 29.

end. Thus the Church hath affirmed her belief of the eternity of the reign of JESUS. Lift up your hearts, my brethren, to the contemplation of this stupendous verity. Picture to yourselves the term of the earth exhausted—the world grown old and hoary and withered away—nay, rather, burnt up as a cinder, and shrivelled like a parched scroll—the whole race of man run and accomplished—the judgment past—the portion allotted—the travail of the SAVIOUR'S soul seen—and the unspeakable purposes of His beneficence and love fulfilled beyond the most sanguine expectation. Fix this thought in your mind and then add to this contemplation, the idea of a kingdom, and a rule, and a dominion, in which GOD shall be all in all—a kingdom in which according to His inferior nature the SON shall be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, “yielding not a forced obedience but a self-chosen accordance,”¹ but in which, by virtue of the tremendous and ineffable continuance of the same inferior nature He shall reign for ever, be deemed worthy of the kingly throne, and therein “be adored by all the companies of the heavenly host, angels, and arch-

¹ S. Cyril xv. 30.

“And I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle.” (Rev. xiv. 14.)

angels, thrones, dominations, principedoms, virtues, powers, for ever and ever.”¹

Is the thought of our LORD’s Ascension as connected with His royalty exhausted? I trow not. The ascension of our LORD hath not terminated in Himself. It is our ascension also. The coronation of our LORD is not merely the assumption of Royal State by our ascended Head, it is also the coronation of His body mystical. The nature of man in the Person of the Divine Word hath been seated upon the throne of God. Who shall now use unworthy words of the worthlessness of that which is thus united to God? Who shall now undervalue the exalted position of the true Christian? Who shall now dare to profane, either in body, soul, or spirit, that which has attained to so high a destiny?

Alas, alas! the greater part of mankind pass through life without one thought of this supernatural destiny. They have been made kings and priests to God in privilege, yet they pass their time as the slaves and flatterers of the world which they love too well. They have been called to an inheritance with the saints in light, and they spend their days in idleness, in frivolity, in luxury, in pride, in sin, as if this life were to last for ever. Alas, alas! for the

¹ S. Chrys. Hom. in S. Joh. xi.

many who are heirs of a kingdom and have made no effort to secure it—who have received the promise of an eternal crown, and have bartered that promise for pleasures that perish in the using. What will it avail you, my brethren, at the last day, that your LORD has ascended to heaven—that your human nature has been crowned in His Person, if you go on in worldliness and half-hearted service—if you indulge in secret sin, adding hypocrisy to the rest¹ of your enormities—if you deliberately take your part with the things here below, and never seek those things above, where CHRIST sitteth at the right hand of God?



SERMON XIII.

THE MARRIAGE OF CANA.

S. JOHN II. 10.

"THOU HAST KEPT THE GOOD WINE UNTIL NOW."

THE exquisite scene of the Marriage of Cana has deeply imprinted itself upon the imagination of the Church. It belongs as it were to the twilight, between the hidden life of our LORD and His public life. Though it occurred after His Baptism, (for it is said "the third day," and though not specifically stated, the preceding chapter assumes that mighty event,) yet all the actors are so much more closely connected with those mysterious thirty years in which He was subject to Joseph and Mary, that we seem almost as if we were witnessing one of those blessed passages of the holy household of Nazareth, concerning which our imaginations ask so much and revelation responds so little.

How simple are the actors in this scene and what a contrast to their eventual glory. Contrast our Blessed LORD sitting with His holy Mother and with His few Disciples, among those happy rustics, and the same Blessed Company, at the day of Judgment and the Marriage Feast of the LAMB. The Son of Man in His Glory—the Queen on His right in a vesture of gold, wrought about with divers colours; those sitting on His right hand and on His left, to whom it is given of the FATHER, the lowly, exalted, the meek inheriting the earth, and they who have been lightly esteemed in this world exalted to great honour.

But simple and beautiful as the scene is, mighty mysteries are wrapped up therein. Whatever the SON of GOD hath touched hath received the impress of His benediction. He did nothing by chance or at random. It was for a purpose that He was present at the Marriage Feast. Our Service Book alludes to our SAVIOUR adorning and beautifying marriage by His presence and first miracle that He wrought in Cana of Galilee, and this suggests to us a line of thought which may well be followed out by us.

First; our LORD by His presence at the Marriage Feast gives His sanction to all civil society—to the polity in which we live. For

inasmuch as the family, as an institution is founded in marriage, and the state is but a congeries of families, we may surely gather that this fresh ratification of the marriage contract by our LORD, independent of its deep sacramental meaning with reference to the unity of the Church, was inaugurated by Him from a deep sense of its importance to the well being of the world. And indeed, deep observers have noticed that the sanctity and integrity of the marriage bond is the best test of the whole-heartedness of a nation. Where that is weakened there the elements of dissolution and decay may be discovered, where it is maintained in its purity, there society is healthy at the core, other symptoms of disease notwithstanding. In fact, the family being, as it were, a sort of federative type of the nation, a law of kind runs through them both. Happiness and virtue in the house are correlatives of freedom and order in the state, while the decaying nation and the waning liberty are too often found in close connection with "the want of natural affection" which was one of the evidences of the decaying state of the heathen world, when Christianity came to restore it.

Again, the presence of our LORD at the Marriage of Cana gives its sanction to what I may term the innocent side of the world just as we

find it. There is always an attempt in the mind of man to make for itself a world better and happier than that in which God hath placed us. Hence the many Utopias which have been written—the ideal republics which since the time of Plato have exercised the imaginations of the amiable theorists of the world. To the same spirit may be attributed the political attempts at theocracies of various kinds, such as those of some of the early heretics, the family of love, and, we might perhaps add, the mightiest of all such organizations, and that which came nearest to realization—the great Hildebrandine idea of the kingdom of S. Peter, which was to reign over body and soul, and to execute righteousness, judgment, and mercy in the name of Him who shall rule among the nations.

Now our LORD's conduct with regard to men seems to strike at the bottom of this view. He did not make an aggression upon society as such. He would not be taken to be made a king. He did not unfurl the banner of a temporal as well as of a spiritual Messiahship. On the contrary; He saved one here and another there. He elected one family at Bethany. He reconciled one bad woman at the well by the wayside, and another at the feast of Simon the Pharisee. He selected less than a dozen from the teeming population of the fishermen of Gennesaret—

here a little, there a little. He threw Himself into humanity to bless it.

And so we find did His immediate successors. The Apostles made no attempt to influence the politics of the world. S. Paul enjoins prayers, supplications, and Eucharists to be offered for Nero, and the early Christians ever besought God for the continuance and stability of the Empire.

These facts meet a common error among thoughtless Christians. They say, 'were the world better, how much better should I be;' or the thought perhaps takes a more individual shape. 'I know I do such and such wrong or unrecollected things, but if I were only in a sisterhood, how religious I should be.' 'I am prevented by my large family from giving such time to prayer as I ought; were I a single person like neighbour so and so, how much time might I not devote to religion.' 'My daily occupation prevents my thinking as much about the next world as I ought; when I am old and out of business or politics, I shall then be able to give to God a fitter portion of my time and thoughts.' 'This also is vanity,' and the presence of our LORD at the Marriage Feast shows us that He, if sought, will be found in the ordinary events of life—and that He is not the less there, because they are events, which on

the surface at least, have no immediate reference to everlasting life.

But the miracle carries us a step further. It hallows our legitimate recreation and society with our fellow-creatures. There is a religionism which tabooes certain forms of social intercourse, giving free scope to many others. I do not mean to say there may not be some forms of social intercourse so closely connected with sin and sinners, so sensualizing without being positively improper, so connected with an organized system of wickedness, that a person may peril his soul in partaking of it; but ordinarily speaking, it is not in the form of the amusement that the danger lies. Nay, so deceitful is the human heart, that men are apt to indemnify themselves for the rigid proscription of one form of dissipation, by many relaxations in other matters, upon which the religious world (O contradiction in terms!) has set its ban.

There is both *blessing* and *trial* in the intercourse with our fellow-men.

Blessing there is; for, first of all, it is our appointed lot, we cannot in some shape or other fly from the world; and if it be our appointed lot, doubtless God has a good intention connected with it.

But, moreover, the intercourse with our fellows checks positiveness and many unamiable

faults, destroys peculiarities of manner and tone which often are allowed to grow up from indolence, temper, and want of regard to the feelings of others, and lastly, strikes a great blow at selfishness. It is possible enough, God knows, to be selfish and hard in society, but there is even more danger in the solitude of single life, or in the narrowed sympathies of the small exclusive family. Unless a man be very hard indeed, needs must be that his sympathies are drawn out, his interest excited, and his whole nature bettered on the whole by collision with men.

But what an engine for good may intercourse with our fellows be, in the hands of a good man. We never can measure the power we have, one on another, and there is a subtle atmosphere surrounding us which seems to influence others in a way we know not. The cords of a man, of which the Prophet speaks, are strung more finely than we can tell, and there is given to all of us, though no doubt to some in a much higher degree than to others, the perilous faculty of working for good or for evil on the souls and spirits of those with whom we have to do.

If, however, society has its advantages, what shall we say of its trials? The world in which we must perforce live, is that very world which

we have renounced in our baptismal covenant. "The world lieth in wickedness." The faculty of influence, as we have seen, may be for evil; how are we to escape? First, doubtless, by recognizing and actually facing our dangers.

1. The first danger of society is dissipation of mind. The things we see have so much more immediate influence upon us than the things we do not see, that the very exterior world of our fellow-men is a certain hindrance to faith. A thousand various things—you have but to look over the mighty broad-sheet of those ephemeral publications which detail the news of the day, to say how various—occupy and interest us. Every desire, every pursuit, can be catered for: every natural disposition, every acquired science, finds its proper food: every taste, every affection, every disposition, finds in the world fit matter for its exercise. Is it then to be wondered at, that the very first danger of society is a certain dissipation of mind, a craving after excitement, a hankering after immediate satisfaction, a desire to keep up by fresh interest a certain fever of the spirit, which, without our knowing it, has insinuated itself into our whole inner nature?

2. And next, it cannot be doubted but that the society of our fellows leads equally to a love

of the world ; for in one sense that very world is only another form for the subtle or potent influence which those with whom we have to do exercise upon us. And it is strange how it grows upon each of us. We wonder at those who have been about Court never being satisfied to be away from it afterwards, and delighting in its formal restraints and menial duties, instead of enjoying the freedom which wealth, and intellect, and a high position give one. We perhaps smile at this willing slavery, but is there no such slavery in our own cases? Are there not silver sticks and gold keys in the lot of every one, which we covet above all things, and for which we forego comfort and self-respect in this world, if not the higher gifts of the world to come? Strange is it, how the love of the world possesses itself of people ; how no sooner do they come within its magic circle, than they are absorbed into its vortex. Even pure and simple natures, unless carefully watched, are apt to take harm from this, so bright is the tinsel varnish of that which perishes in the using.

3. Society is a door to temptation. We would not consort with our fellow men, were there not some attraction in their society. Well does the devil bait his hook to catch the souls of men. I do not here speak of the mere vul-

gar splendour of equipage, plate, furniture, and the like, though doubtless many a vulgar soul is hooked with no better concealed bait than that—but I mean that there is in the refinement of the world, in the studious care to avoid the slightest irritation of the self-love, in the will to please for pleasing's sake, something most perilous to the soul. Doubtless also beyond this, there are further temptations. Society contains all; all must be amused, all must be interested: and here the evil will and the unholy talent come together to surround vice with all the seductiveness which the intellect and taste, and even the perverted gifts of heart and affection, combine to promote and foster. How sad is it to see the young gradually being drawn into the meshes of sin. Their fine capacity for love drawn to cling to the perishing things of this world, instead of to God, Who alone can satisfy the aching heart: their fresh, vigorous minds grasping with a vigour worthy of a better object that which will surely be their ruin. Alas! for the forfeiture of baptismal innocence, and the loss of vocations. How often, in one moment of excitement, is grace resisted, and innocence lost, and a wound inflicted on the soul, never, never again to be wholly cured, and the whole career darkened and blackened, the sun of life setting in obscurity, even if God

should be intreated, and vouchsafe pardon, and receive again the poor crippled wanderer to His pardon and forgiveness.

4. Again, intercourse with the world greatly imperils recollectedness, and the habitual practice of the Presence of God. It is only by much communing with our Maker and Fashioner that we arrive at a constant, and abiding, and controlling sense of His Presence. Nay, in its higher degrees, it is generally the accompaniment of well-preserved baptismal grace, the reward of an unbroken abiding under the shadow of God's wings. Thoughtful children and child-like Christians are they who bear this thought most constrainingly about with them; while, on the other hand, when the habit has been broken by a long course of sin and forgetfulness, it requires much effort before it can be recovered,—nay, perhaps never is entirely restored to the penitent, seek he it never so instantly with tears. The wanderings in prayer that so often perplex returning and returned sinners illustrate one chapter in this history of the human soul. Now it cannot be denied that society is very inimical to this recollectedness. How *can* it be maintained, when the conversation is sparkling, and every power of the intellect strained to amuse and be amused? How can the calm, serious thought of eternity, and

the infinite malice of sin, and the tender love of Jesus for us one by one, and the necessity of grace, and the intercession of the HOLY GHOST, be present and animating truths within the soul, at the very moment when the influence of the prestige of worldly fashion or worldly distinction is bearing everything before us, or when our minds are bent upon the attainment of some earnestly coveted, yet most trivial advantage? Nor is the evil over when we leave the seductive company. Alas! we carry to our homes these dissipating recollections; we act over again, in imagination, the glittering scene, renew our imaginary triumphs, improve the compliment we but imperfectly offered, or curse ourselves for the maladroitness of some unhappy allusion. This also is vanity. "Take heed, ye unwise among the people! O ye fools, when will ye understand?"

It is vanity, for here comes the great law of the world's blessing. The best are given first. It is enunciated in the words of the Gospel: "Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine, and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse." "When men have well drunk,"—when they have tasted all that the world can give,—when they have taken their fill of pleasure, of ambition, and of covetousness,—then comes "that which is worse,"

satiety, the constant sight of the seamy side of the tapestry of life, coldness of heart, and the destruction of the capacity of faith either in God or man. Miserable is the end of the old voluptuary, who, as age advances, is abandoned by his vices, not they by him. Shame, shame upon the dishonoured, hoary head of such an one, who, instead of calling forth the respect of the young, is only their butt and jest; who, in the remembrance of his ancient sins, again and again renews their complacent, damning guilt; whose very glance is dishonour, whose touch is pollution, and who at length goes to his God in the idiotcy of unrepenting age, unwept, unhonoured, unregretted, unforgiven.

Nor fares he better who comes to drink "that which is worse" of the chalice of human glory. Who pities the man who, after a long career of the worship of self-seeking and expediency, finds at last that he has overreached himself, and that he is cast aside for some newer support by the party to whom he has sold himself? But without assuming the accident of failure, what is the old age of him who has made worldly success his idol, self-advancement the deity he has bowed to? Well, he has attained all this; he is honoured, run after, his name is mentioned by foreigners, he is pointed out as he passes in the public ways—and what then?

This is not enough to satisfy the cravings of an immortal soul. The fullest earthly success, no better than the most excelling earthly pleasure, is insufficient to fill the mighty void within the soul of man, which ought to be the resting-place of God ; and so the ambitious man goes on to the end, seeking rest, and finding none ; plunging into fresh excitement, in quest of new honours and of happiness.

Neither does avarice, though the most abiding of earthly joys, fare better than the others. The deep feeling of conscious power which the increasing store of money gives, is no doubt, especially in the old and cautelous, one of the most deep-seated gratifications of our fallen nature. It eats out everything else ; it supplies the place of every other excitement, and bears out the Scriptural anathema, that it is idolatry, from the devotion and assiduity of its cultus. But even it has its drawbacks. Sometimes it becomes a perfect disease, and the miser, rolling in riches, firmly believes that he is to die a pauper. Even, in a less degree, he refuses to allow himself in the common gratifications open to the most moderate fortune ; but most commonly it engenders a niggard, grudging spirit, content with nothing, without any inward resources, which, after toiling and labouring for the accumulation of wealth, after surrounding

itself by the pomps and luxuries of the world, finds that one thing has been forgotten in the well-furnished house, but that forgotten thing is—happiness.

My brethren, would you see the worldling drinking that which is worse, after having taken his fill of the luxuries of this life? Go into one of those stately palaces, in which, by virtue of the power of combination, the luxuries of the noblest fortunes are brought within the reach of the well-born poor. Behold, within that mirrored saloon, on those morocco cushions, the jaded and debilitated form of the old frequenter. See him avoided by the gay and thoughtless crowd, uncared for by the elders, who are entering upon the same course of loveless selfishness with himself, the object of the contempt of the very menials of the establishment. See him totter into the chill night air, and follow him to the wretched and lofty lodging-house, to which he will night after night repair, till death overtake him and he perish, without a single regret or a single remark save that he is gone, or a scoffed reminiscence of his weaknesses or his follies.

Or go into one of those brilliant circles, where the young, and the gay, and the beautiful are enjoying the hour as it passes. Watch those hard faces which encircle the room, and

tell me whether you will find any happiness there. Those haggard, painted countenances once beamed with youth, and health, and innocence, and beauty. Those trembling heads adorned with diamonds, and those claw-like hands covered with costly rings, once excited the admiration of such as those who in succession are passing their ephemeral existence in folly and dissipation. At first it was enjoyment, but soon the world began to show its hollowness. Then came disappointment, and a sore heart which the world could not fill; and time passed, and neglect began to add to the miseries of the hour. Younger and fresher faces now excited the admiration once claimed by them; but the habit was formed. They had bowed down to the world; and the world now claimed them for its own. They have lost the pleasure, but they cannot do without it. Happy or unhappy, they have chosen their part; and that part, miserable, loveless, futureless as it is, shall not be taken away from them.

“O ye sons of men, how long will ye blaspheme Mine honour, and have such pleasure in vanity, and seek after leasing?”

How different is religion! “Thou hast kept the good wine until now.” The book of wisdom well describes the process of the grace of God within the soul.

First comes discipline, and after discipline peace. Discipline is of two kinds, either the forming of holy habits, which is self-mastery, or the repentance of past sin, which is contrition. A hard and grievous struggle is that of the returning penitent. Many a backsliding, many a disappointment may occur ere the end be attained. To the last that end is doubtful, and who shall think themselves safe when they think of the deficiency of motive or proportion in their sorrow for the past? But the conquest is achieved. Blessed be God for the fruit of that everlasting Intercession which is being wrought for us at His right hand. We *have* an advocate with the FATHER. He *is* the propitiation for our sins. However deep the dye of our sins may have been, in Him is full and perfect redemption, justification, sanctification, and salvation.

And who shall describe the peace that passeth understanding of a soul subdued to conformity to the Divine will? "Thou hast kept the good wine until now." Who shall describe what it is to have the affections chastened, and the memory filled with the recollection of the past mercies of God, and the intellect directed to Divine truth, giving a right judgment on all things both of faith and morals? Who shall tell the blessedness of the sense of the combined abiding

under the shadow of the **ALMIGHTY** and the assured hope that His mercies in times past are the earnest of His future loving-kindness and of His support and assistance unto the end? And then think of the blessed calm that comes upon the soul, as it realizes the unspeakable rest of being at peace with God—the conviction, that if we are really well with Him, and in repose in the depth of the ocean of His Love, all the perturbations of this life can but ruffle the surface, and while the storms rage and the winds blow, and the waves are mighty, the **LORD** that dwelleth on high is mightier, and immersed in the unfathomable abyss of His protection, all around us is still.

Nor is this a matter of temporary bliss—an occasional benediction from the **ALMIGHTY**. On the contrary, as the day draweth to a close, and the night of death approacheth, this holy rest in God becomes more and more manifest. How beautiful is the sight of holy eld: the calmness of temper, the patient waiting till the change come, the contented spirit, the devout communing with God, which adorn the declining years of the good, is an earnest of that perpetual Sabbath, on which they so soon shall enter. God hath kept the good wine until now. Surrounded by such holy associations the very decay and weakening of the mind hath

nothing hideous or contemptible in its enfeeblement; the powers that were used in the world are no longer needful when that world is passing away. A heavenly sweetness nourished on a devout sense of the past mercies of God is a fit successor to the keen intellect which ruled the conduct during the heyday of vigour and strength; and Nature herself prepares the way for an easy transition from this life.



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